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THE PRINCETON PULPIT.

THE
PRINCETON PULPIT.

EDITED BY
JOHN T. DUFFIELD,
ADJUNCT PROFESSOR OF MATHEMATICS, IN PRINCETON COLLEGE.

NEW YORK :
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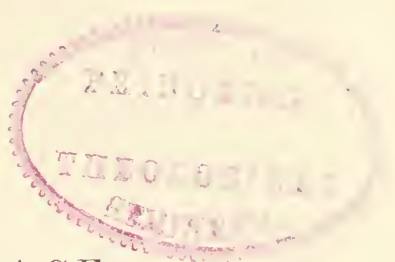
CHARLES SCRIBNER,

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PREFACE.

THE Sermons, which are here given to the public, were not originally prepared for this purpose. They were, generally, delivered in Princeton, by the different contributors, in the ordinary course of their ministerial labours. The immediate design of their present publication is to aid the Second Presbyterian Church of Princeton. With this object in view, the contributions were kindly furnished, at the request of the Compiler. He was induced to undertake this work, by assurances from various quarters, that such a volume, would not only be gratefully received by the numerous graduates of the College and Seminary of Princeton, as an interesting memento of their Instructors, but would be regarded by many other friends of those Institutions, as an acceptable contribution to our religious literature. Under these circumstances, the volume is submitted to the public, with prayerful trust, that by God's blessing it may be instrumental in promoting His glory.

The sermon of Dr. Miller was selected from his published discourses, he having requested that none of his

manuscript sermons should be published, after his death. It was originally delivered before the Dorcas Society of the City of New York.

The sermon of Dr. Archibald Alexander is probably the last complete discourse he ever prepared, and was delivered by him in the City of New York, at the installation of his son, the Rev. James W. Alexander, D.D.

The friends of Prof. Dod have selected from his manuscripts a sermon, which from its subject, was one of his favourite discourses. Its devout and elevating sentiments, in regard to "those things that are not seen," will doubtless be read with peculiar interest, now that he who uttered them, is no longer looking at those things, "as through a glass, darkly," but "face to face" beholds them, with the open vision of one of "the spirits of the just made perfect."

J. T. D.

PRINCETON, N. J., *May*, 1852.



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THE APPROPRIATE DUTY AND ORNAMENT OF THE FEMALE SEX.

BY

THE REV. SAMUEL MILLER, D. D.,

PROFESSOR OF ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY AND CHURCH GOVERNMENT.

Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which, by interpretation, is called Dorcas; this woman was full of good works and alms-deeds which she did.—ACTS IX.

SACRED history differs from profane, in a variety of important particulars. The latter is chiefly employed in exhibiting the struggles of ambition, the triumphs of power, and the glare of blood-stained honors: the former dwells more on the duties of private life, and especially on the meek, humble, and retiring graces of the Christian. The one presents a splendid, but not always faithful picture, which is calculated to indulge curiosity, and to flatter pride; the other unfolds the heart, displays its character in all the simplicity and correctness of truth, and sets before us examples proper for the imitation of every age, and sex, and condition of mankind.

The portion of sacred history before us com-

prises, within a very small compass, much matter for reflection. It exhibits a character, and a train of circumstances, from which we may at all times learn a variety of important lessons, but which are peculiarly applicable to our present purpose.

“There was residings at Joppa,” a sea-port town on the Mediterranean, about thirty-four miles northwest of Jerusalem, “a certain woman named Tabitha, which, by interpretation, is called Dorcas.” The former of these names is a Syriac word, signifying a *roe* or *fawn*; the latter, a Greek word, of the same import. This woman was “a disciple.” That is, she had embraced the gospel, and lived under its power. Her religion did not consist merely in “calling Christ, Lord, Lord.” She testified the sincerity of her faith by a holy life and conversation. She “was full of good works, and of alms-deeds which she did.”

But the most sincere and exemplary piety is no defence against the attacks of disease and death. All die, because all have sinned. “It came to pass, therefore, in those days”—that is, when the Apostle *Peter* was preaching in *Lydda*, a neighboring town, that *Dorcas* was taken “sick and died.” Immediately after her death, the pious widows, and other disciples, who had attended her during her illness, having taken a decent and respectful care of the corpse, dispatched messengers to the apostle, entreating him to come to them without delay. Whether they anticipated his raising their departed friend from the dead, or only expected him to attend the funeral, and to comfort them under

their bereavement, we have scarcely ground even for conjecture. At any rate, in sending for the Apostle, they manifested at once their attachment and respect for the deceased, and a taste for his evangelical instruction and conversation.

I know scarcely anything in this world, more desirable, or more gratifying than the friendship, the consolations, and the kind offices of the pious; and especially in the day of trial, and at the hour of death. At seasons of this kind, the gay and the worldly are apt to fly from us. But even if they give us their presence, what will it avail? Alas! "miserable comforters are they all?" What can they tell us of that gospel which hath poured eternal day on "the night of the grave," or of that "blood which cleanseth from all sin?" What can they tell us of the "exceeding great and precious promises—of "everlasting consolation," and of "a good hope through grace?" When my last hour is come, let pious friends surround my bed! Let those who fear God, and have an interest at the throne of grace, direct my trembling aspirations to Jesus, the friend of sinners! Let pious hands close my eyes! And let "devout men carry me, like Stephen, to my burial!"

The holy Apostle on receiving the summons, entered immediately into the spirit of that pious friendship which had called him, and followed the messengers without delay. When he came to the dwelling which had been lately adorned with the piety and the active beneficence of *Dorcas*, he found her lifeless remains lying in an "upper cham-

ber," and surrounded with mourning widows. On his entering the apartment, they gathered about him, "weeping, and shewing the coats and garments which Dorcas had made while she was with them." It is probable, from the tenor of the narrative, that these pious widows had been themselves the objects of her *alms-deeds*; and that the *coats* and other *garments* with which they were then clothed, had been made by the hands, and bestowed by the bounty of their deceased benefactor. These they showed to the apostle, as testimonies of her benevolent character, and as causes for lamenting her departure. Simple, but touching and eloquent eulogium! O how much more precious to the ingenuous mind, to be embalmed in the memory of the virtuous and the wise, than to be commemorated by the sculptured marble, or the massy pyramid! How much better than all the blaze of heraldry, or "pomp of power," to have it said concerning us, when we are gone—"There lies one who fed me when I was hungry; who clothed me when I was naked; who enlightened my mind with heavenly knowledge, and pointed to me the path of life eternal."

The Apostle, having witnessed these tears, and contemplated these memorials, requested the mourners to withdraw, that he might avoid all appearance of ostentation in the miracle which he was about to perform; and that he might with more perfect freedom pour out his soul in prayer. When they had retired, "he kneeled down and prayed; and, turning him to the body, said, Tabi-

tha, arise. And she opened her eyes; and when she saw Peter she sat up. And he gave her his hand, and lifted her up; and when he had called the saints and widows, he presented her alive."

Who can describe the surprise and joy of the attendants at seeing their amiable friend restored to life and usefulness? Above all, who can describe the mingled emotions of regret and pleasure, which must have filled the mind of *Dorcas*, to find herself brought back to a world which she had supposed herself to have for ever quitted; and again united to companions whom she had expected never to see more until they should join her in the paradise of God?—I dare not attempt the task. Leaving, therefore, this topic of meditation, which, however deeply interesting, cannot subserve any important practical purpose,—

I hasten to employ the example of this excellent woman as the basis of some very brief and general remarks on *the appropriate duty and ornament of the Female Sex*.

And here I shall not stop to inquire, whether the native character of the female mind is, in all respects, precisely the same with that of the other sex. Whatever opinion may be formed on this subject, I take for granted, we shall all agree, that Women ought not to be considered as destined to the same employments with Men; and, of course, that there is a species of education, and a sphere of action, which more particularly belong to them. There was a time, indeed, when a very different doctrine had many advocates, and appeared to be

growing popular:—viz. that in conducting education, and in selecting employments, all distinctions of sex ought to be forgotten and confounded; and that females are as well fitted to fill the academic Chair, to shine in the Senate, to adorn the Bench of justice, and even to lead the train of War, as the more hardy sex. This delusion, however, is now generally discarded. It begins to be perceived, that the God of nature has raised everlasting barriers against such wild and mischievous speculations; and that to urge them, is to renounce reason, to contradict experience, to trample on the divine authority, and to degrade the usefulness, the honor, and the real enjoyments of the female sex.

But an error of an *opposite* kind has gained a lamentable currency in the world. This is, that the station of females is so humble, and their sphere of duty so extremely limited, that they neither *can*, nor *ought* to aspire to extensive usefulness. This is the mistake of indolence, or of false humility; and is as plainly contradicted by reason, by scripture, and by experience, as the extreme before mentioned. While females are shut out by the express authority of God from some offices, and by the common sense of mankind from others; there is yet open to them an immense field for the most dignified activity, in which they may glorify God, render essential service to society, and gain everlasting honor to themselves.

We often have occasion, from the sacred desk, to exhibit in contrast, the representations of scripture, and the sentiments of a depraved world. This

contrast seldom appears in a stronger light than it does on the subject of which we are now speaking. In the codes of modern infidelity and licentiousness, as well as among uncivilized nations, woman is exhibited as the mere servile instrument of convenience or pleasure. In the volume of Revelation she is represented as the equal, the companion, and the help-meet of man. In the language of worldly taste, a fine woman is one who is distinguished for her personal charms, and polite accomplishments. In the language of Scripture, she is the enlightened and virtuous mistress of a family, and the useful member of society. The woman who is formed on the principles of the world, finds no enjoyment but in the circles of affluence, gayety, and fashion. The woman who is formed on the principles of the Bible, "goeth about doing good: she visiteth the fatherless and the widows in their affliction: she stretcheth forth her hands to the poor, yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy." The one dresses with elegance, and shines in the dance: the other "opens her mouth with wisdom; in her tongue is the law of kindness;" and her most valued adorning is not "gold, or pearls, or costly array; but good works, and the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit." The hours of the one are divided between routs, and assemblies, and visiting, and theatres, and cards: the other "looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness." "The business of the one is pleasure: the pleasure of the other is business. The one is admired abroad; the other is beloved and honored

at home." "Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her. Favor is deceitful, and beauty is vain; but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised."

From these representations of sacred writ, and from many others of similar import, it is manifest, that the ornament and the duty of the female sex, are as appropriate as they are important: and that they pertain especially to the relations which they bear as wives,—as mothers,—as domestic companions, and—as members of society. On each of these relations, an extensive field of inquiry opens to our view; but it is only possible to take a very rapid glance at each, in the order in which they have been mentioned.

I. How interesting and important are the duties devolved on females as WIVES! On their temper and deportment, more than those of any other individuals, it depends, whether their husbands be happy or miserable; whether the households over which they preside be well ordered and regular, or neglected and wretched; whether the property of their partners be wisely and economically applied, or carelessly and ignobly squandered; in a word, whether peace, affection, order, and plenty, reign in their dwellings, or waste, confusion, discord, and alienation disgrace them. Females have been often honoured with the title of *angels*. If it be ever proper to apply such an appellation to a daughter of a fallen race, there is surely no mortal to whom it so properly applies, as a prudent, virtuous, and amiable wife, the counsellor and friend of her hus-

band ; who makes it her daily study to lighten his cares, to soothe his sorrows, and to augment his joys ; who, like a guardian angel, watches over his interests, warns him against dangers, comforts him under trials ; and by her pious, assiduous, and attractive deportment, constantly endeavours to render him more virtuous, more useful, more honored, and more happy. The blessings which such a woman is capable of conferring on her partner, and through him, on society, are more numerous and diversified than a volume would be sufficient to display. In how many instances have we known wives of this character become the means of winning their unbelieving husbands to the obedience of the faith ! When this is the case, who can estimate the greatness of the blessing ? Like the light of day, it pours its benign influence upon each member of the favored domestic circle ; and ever permanent in its effects, reaches through eternal ages.

II. No less numerous and weighty are the duties devolved on females as *mothers*. Children, during the first years of their lives, are necessarily committed almost entirely to the care of mothers. And the impressions which are then made on their tender minds, generally decide their character and destiny, not only for this life, but also for that which is to come. In that soft and plastic season, when the temper, the principles, and the habits are formed ; when the heart is deeply impressed ; when the conscience is tender ; when the whole character is ductile ; when almost every thing but the rege-

neration of the heart may be said to be within the power of a parent to bestow ; and when even the attainment of this greatest of all gifts has a closer connexion with parental faithfulness than is generally imagined—this is, emphatically, the period of the maternal empire. Her's is the delightful, the all-important task, to watch over the infant years of her offspring ; to guard them from the thousand dangers to which they are exposed ; to form a sound mind in a sound body ; to whisper in their listening ears, the sentiments of virtue and piety ; and to prepare them for living to God, to their country, and to themselves.

On this ground, I have no scruple in avowing my conviction, that, in the whole business of education, *the mother is the more important parent*. It may, perhaps, without extravagance, be said, that to the female sex pre-eminently belongs the mighty task, so far as it depends on human agency, of forming the heads and hearts of the great mass of mankind. To them it belongs to render their families the nurseries either of heaven or of hell. Their enlightened fidelity or their criminal negligence, will, under God, decide the character of those future citizens, on whose virtues the whole interests of the commonwealth will depend ; of those legislators on whose wisdom the character of our laws must rest ; of those magistrates, with whose learning and correct principles the whole fabric of public justice must stand or fall ; and of those ministers of the gospel, on whose orthodoxy and piety the salvation of millions, speaking after

the manner of men, may be suspended. It is thus that maternal faithfulness or negligence goes to the root of social happiness. It is thus that mothers may be the means of transmitting blessings or calamities, of incalculable extent, to distant generations.

III. *Every domestic relation* which females sustain, may be considered as opening to them an appropriate and important sphere of duty. Great and permanent usefulness in domestic life is by no means confined to wives and mothers. The female who sustains neither of these honorable and interesting relations, may yet be eminently useful. How much may every *daughter*, by uniformly dutiful and affectionate conduct towards her parents, promote the happiness of the whole household to which she belongs; and by her example contribute to the improvement of all around her! How much solid good may every *sister* daily accomplish, by diligently employing her talents, in assisting to educate her younger brothers and sisters, in promoting the regularity, order, and comfort of the family of which she is a member, and in recommending at once, by her whole deportment, the wisdom of economy, the sweetness of benevolence, and the purity of holiness! Nay, how much may every female *servant* contribute to the advantage of the family in which her lot is cast! It was a *little maid* in the house of *Naaman*, the Syrian, that directed her master to the prophet of the Lord, by whom his leprosy was healed, and by whose ministry he became a convert to the true

religion. And were the history of many families laid open to our view, how often should we see the pious language and holy example of some inferior domestic made a blessing to more than one of those whom she served !

Every female, then, who, in whatever capacity, makes a part of any domestic establishment, whether she preside as its head, or serve as its humblest menial, has it in her power to do good, to an extent which it is the prerogative of Omniscience alone to estimate. She has means and opportunities of usefulness peculiar to her sex and station—Means and opportunities which, if faithfully improved, cannot fail, according to the Divine promise, to produce a rich result of blessing. The tongue of eloquence, indeed, may never pronounce her eulogium, nor the pen of history record her deeds. But in the “heraldry of heaven,” in which to be *good* is better than to be *great*, and to be *useful* is better than to *shine*, she may hold a place more illustrious and honorable than many of those who have wielded the sceptre of empire, and filled the world with the thunder of their fame.

IV. Females have set before them a wide and appropriate field of useful activity, *as members of society*. Let no woman imagine that she has nothing to do beyond the sphere of her own household. In every walk, and in every hour of life, she may be contributing something to the purity, the order, and the happiness of the community to which she belongs. The influence of the female character in forming public taste, and public man-

ners, is incalculable. It has been felt and acknowledged in all ages. Of this influence, every woman, whatever be her talents or her station, possesses a share ; and by her whole deportment is conferring either a benefit or an injury on society. It is in the power of women, by constantly exhibiting the dignity of virtue, and the attractions of piety, to repress the impertinence, to polish the roughness, and to frown out of sight, and, in many instances, out of existence, the vices of the other sex. It is in the power of women, by example and by precept, to regulate at pleasure the decorums of dress, the purity of manners, and all the habits, of the younger and more inexperienced part of their own sex. In short, it is in the power of women, to an extent of which few of them seem to be aware, to discountenance and banish those pernicious customs which, from time to time, display their hydra forms in society, and to exercise a most efficient guardianship over public taste and virtue. No false sentiments can have much prevalence against which *they* resolutely set their faces. No corrupt practices can be general or popular which *they* are willing to expel from society.

“Human happiness,” says a modern writer, “is on the whole, much less affected by great, but unfrequent events, whether of prosperity or of adversity, of benefit or of injury, than by small but perpetually recurring incidents of good or evil. The manner in which the influence of the female character is felt, belongs to the latter description. It is not like the periodical inundation of a river,

which, once in a year, overspreads a desert with transient plenty. It is like the dew of heaven, which descends at all seasons, returns after short intervals, and permanently nourishes every herb of the field.”*

To the female sex also properly appertains a large portion of those offices of *charity*, to which we are constantly called. To feed the hungry, and clothe the naked; to “weep with them that weep;” to soften the bed of sickness, and to wipe away the tears of sorrow, are duties incumbent upon us all. But they belong more particularly to the tender sex. They are best acquainted with domestic wants. They are the best judges of domestic character. They have more sympathy, more tenderness, more leisure, and more patience than men; and, on a variety of accounts, are more capable of performing these duties with ease to themselves, and with advantage to the objects of their charity.

Here is surely enough to excite all the ambition, and to employ all the talents of a reasonable mind. What though females cannot stand in the sacred Desk, nor sit on the Bench of justice? What though they cannot be employed in framing laws, nor in conducting diplomatic missions, nor in organizing or governing nations? They can contribute more by their virtues and their influence to bind society together, than all the laws that legislators ever formed. They are called to duties which are not only worthy of the most exalted powers; but which have this pre-eminent advan-

* Gisborne. Duties of the Female Sex, p. 8.

tage, that, while they are immediately calculated to meliorate the hearts of those who perform them, they also tend to refine and elevate the human character in general, and to render earth more like the paradise of God.

1. Let me apply this subject, by inferring from what has been said, the *unspeakable importance of female education*. If the female character be so important, then the formation of that character must be equally so. If education in general lie at the foundation of individual, domestic, and national happiness, this is especially the case with female education. It is a concern in which the highest interests of mankind are at stake. It involves the vital principle of social welfare. And according as it is attended to or neglected; according as it is wisely or erroneously pursued, will public and private happiness be nourished or poisoned at its root. Upon the education of woman it depends, under God, whether she shall be the most useful, or the most mischievous of mortals; whether she shall be the most invaluable blessing of human society, or "the most dreadful scourge of Almighty visitation."—Solemn thought! How deeply ought the subject to engage the attention, to interest the heart, to excite the prayers, and to animate the diligence of every parent!

We are, perhaps, wiser than our fathers, in having learned to appreciate more justly than they did, the talents of women, and in devising plans of education better fitted to develope and improve these talents. But I am afraid we fall below our

venerable predecessors, in cultivating the moral and religious character of females, and in fitting them for some of the more useful and important duties of their sex. When we learn generally to correct this error; when we teach our daughters properly to estimate their true dignity, and diligently to pursue their real happiness; when we persuade them to reflect, that education consists, not in the acquisition of dazzling and meretricious arts; but in preparing themselves to be respectable and useful as wives, mothers, members of society, and Christians—then, and not till then, may we hope to see the moral character of society raised, and the real importance of the female sex more justly estimated, and more duly honored.

2. Allow me to apply this subject by *recommending the character which has been drawn to the studious imitation of the female part of my audience, and especially of the younger class*. Contracted in its extent, and feeble in its outline, as is the sketch which I have attempted to exhibit, believe me, it is worthy of your attention. It is a character which involves the highest honor, and which embraces its own reward. In recommending it to your imitation, therefore, I am pleading the cause of your own elevation and happiness, as well as the cause of God, and the cause of mankind.

My young female friends! it ought to be your ambition to possess and to evince a sound understanding, and a respectable portion of literary knowledge. All that has been said, serves to show that

the cultivation of female intellect is as important, and as necessary, as the intellectual culture of the other sex. But it ought to be *more especially* your ambition, to cultivate your *hearts*. The *Heart*—I repeat it—the *Heart*, sanctified by religion, warmed and softened by benevolence, and taught to throb in affectionate response to every sigh of suffering, and every claim of humanity,—this is the grand ornament of Woman—this is the stronghold of Woman. To be so many *Tubithas*, adorning the doctrine of God, your Saviour, and diffusing happiness among all around you, would be infinitely more to your honor as well as your comfort, even in the present life, than to stand in the list of those masculine females, who, while they gain a proud civil pre-eminence, really disgrace their sex.

When, therefore, I see a young female devoting her supreme attention to external accomplishments; absorbed in the love of ornament, and of admiration; habitually venturing, in obedience to fashion, to the “very verge of decorum;” never satisfied but when either preparing for the splendor of a public appearance, or discussing the merits of a past exhibition—I say within myself—The hand of some infatuated parent, or of some incompetent or unfaithful guardian, is here. What perversion of talents! What misapplication of exertions! What waste of time! What pains to treasure up sorrow and tears for after life! How much more attractive would be that fair form, were it employed in works of charity, and more frequently seen bending over the

couch of poverty and suffering ! How much more beautiful would be that lovely face, were it habitually beaming with benevolence and piety ! And how unspeakably more happy, and more respectable its possessor, if the cultivation of her heart, and the employment of her time, on evangelical principles, were the great object of her care !

3. This subject may with propriety be employed to *encourage and animate those who are engaged in Female Charitable Associations*. These Associations are an honor to their founders and members—an honor to our holy religion—an honor to all who contribute to their support:—and I will add, that the period which gave them birth, cannot fail of being viewed hereafter, as a grand æra in the history of the female sex, and of mankind. When females are thus associated, and thus employed, they are pre-eminently acting in character. They are moving in a sphere which is peculiarly their own. Their exertions are calculated not merely to relieve present distress, but to improve the condition of society, to cultivate their own hearts, and to confer blessings on generations yet unborn. Were the tendency and the benefits of such associations properly estimated, surely every female would be ambitious to become a member of them ; and every good citizen would consider it, at once, as his privilege and his obligation, to be the friend and the patron of their labors.

Members of such associations ! “ be not weary in well doing.” Your task is arduous ; but it is still more delightful, and shall “ in no wise lose its re-

ward"—a reward more rich, and more glorious than a conqueror's crown. How exquisite the pleasure which is attendant on a course of benevolent exertions, and on witnessing their fruits in the production of human happiness. "What is there in all the pageantry of state, in all the gratifications of sense, in all the delirious joys of giddy dissipation, once to be compared with this? O pleasures, cheaply purchased, placidly enjoyed; ever rising, ever new; never languid, never remorseful, why are you pursued so seldom, and attained by so few?"*

In conclusion, let me say to all, "the time is short, and the fashion of this world passeth away." Like *Dorcas*, we all must soon sicken and die. Are we habitually anticipating the solemnities of that hour? Are we daily directing our pursuits, employing our property, and framing our lives, agreeably to this anticipation? Do we resemble the excellent Woman, on whose example we have been meditating, in our character and hopes, as well as in our mortality? We cannot resemble her, unless we are *disciples* indeed. We may "give all our goods to feed the poor," and "our bodies to be burned," and yet be nothing more than "a sounding brass, and a tinkling cymbal." But those deeds of charity which spring from a living faith in a living Redeemer; those works of obedience which are performed from a principle of love for his name;—these are "the good works, and the alms-deeds," which shed a lustre around the bed of death, and

* Hunter's Occasional Sermons, II. p. 140.

upon which, in a dying hour, we may look back with holy satisfaction, with heavenly joy:—not as the ground of our confidence; not as the price of pardon; not as our title to everlasting life;—no; the righteousness of “Him, who, through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God,” is the only foundation of a sinner’s hope:—but as means by which a Divine Saviour has enabled us to glorify the riches of his grace; as the fruits of his blessed Spirit; as evidences of a vital union to his body; and as pledges of admission to the glories of his presence.

May that God, who has declared himself the “Father of the fatherless, and the Judge of the widow, in his holy habitation,” fill us all with the spirit and the consolations of his children, enable us to imitate his holy benevolence, and prepare us, in due time, for his heavenly kingdom! And to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, one God, be all the praise, both now and ever! Amen!

RIGHTLY DIVIDING THE WORD OF TRUTH.

BY

THE REV. ARCHIBALD ALEXANDER, D. D.

PROFESSOR OF THEOLOGY.

*A Sermon preached in Duane Street Church, New York, on the third day of October, 1844, at the installation of the pastor.**

“Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of Truth.”—2 TIM. ii. 15.

SOME parts of Holy Scripture seem not at any time to have received as much attention as their importance merits, nor as much as is given to other passages, of no greater moment. As an example of what is here asserted, may be adduced the solemn admonition of Paul, in the verse immediately preceding the text, in which he directs Timothy to charge the preachers over whom he had superintendence, (and of course all), “before the Lord, that they strive not about words to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers.” Mere logomachies, or contentions about words, have been productive of incalculable mischief in the Church of God. These unprofitable disputes among the

* This discourse was not prepared for the press, but has been furnished by a member of the author's family from his posthumous manuscripts.

professed followers of Christ, have not only unsettled and subverted the minds of many within the pale of the Church, but have been the occasion of deep-rooted prejudice in those who were without; by which their conversion has in many cases been prevented or hindered. It has long been remarked, that no spirit is more pungent and bitter than that of theologians in their contentions with one another; and it has often happened, that the less the difference, the more virulent the acrimony. When the controversy relates merely, or principally, to words, the strife is more obstinate than when it relates to things, for in that case both parties may be in the right.

But it may be asked, must the servant of God yield the truth to any one who chooses to impugn it, or is he at liberty to make a compromise with error for the sake of peace? I answer, by no means. He is bound to contend for the faith once delivered to the saints, and to hold fast the form of sound words which he has received. Controversy will be necessary so long as error exists, but two things are strictly forbidden: first, unprofitable contention, the tendency of which is "to subvert the hearers;" and, secondly, angry contention, for "the servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle to all men." No man has a right to compromise a single truth, for this is the sacred deposit which he, in common with other ministers, holds for the edification of the Church; and which they are bound to commit to other faithful men, to be transmitted to those who may come after them.

It is not our duty to enter into controversy with all those who may differ from us in matters not fundamental. "Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations." "For one believeth that he may eat all things; another, who is weak, eateth herbs. Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him that eateth not judge him that eateth, for God hath received him. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind." In all such cases, if God's glory be the end, the person will be accepted, although he may be in trivial error. To seek the honor and glory of God, is the grand characteristic of all true Christians. "For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord; whether we live, therefore, or die, we are the Lord's."

In our text, Timothy is exhorted "to approve himself to God as a workman;" this term carries with it the idea of skill in his calling. He cannot with propriety be called a workman who undertakes a business which he knows not how to execute. At any rate, the "workman who needeth not to be ashamed," must be skilled in what relates to his profession. Two sorts of men should, therefore, be excluded from the gospel ministry: first, those who will not work; secondly, those who know not how to perform their work aright. Any man who fails in either of these particulars, will bring shame upon himself. It appears to be implied that peculiar

wisdom is requisite in discharging the duties of this office, for it is added, "rightly dividing the word of truth." Accurate discrimination is here evidently required. Not every ignorant declaimer is capable of doing this. He who would "rightly divide the word of truth" must, unless he be inspired, diligently and for a long time study the Bible. He should study it with all the aids which can be obtained, human and divine. The body cannot be dissected by one who has never studied anatomy, and it would be reckoned great presumption in an ignorant person to undertake to perform the most difficult surgical operation. His motives might be good, and he might be persuaded that he was doing a good thing, but that would not alter the nature of the case, nor render quackery the less dangerous. Such a man could not *rightly divide*, or dissect the parts, so as to do no injury to the vital organs. But does it not argue greater presumption, for ignorant men to thrust themselves into the office of the holy ministry? Is it true that this is a work which can be performed without learning? Or that little danger is to be apprehended from the mistakes into which unskilful workmen may fall? We shall be better able to answer these questions, when we have considered what is requisite in "rightly dividing the word of truth," which is the single object which it is proposed to keep in view in the remainder of this discourse.

TRUTH is of various kinds—physical, mathematical, moral, &c.; but here one particular kind of

truth is referred to, called the WORD OF TRUTH—that is, the truth of the Word of God—the truth of divine revelation—THEOLOGICAL TRUTH. The Bible was not given to teach men philosophy, or the arts which have respect to this life; its object is to teach the true knowledge of God, and the true and only method of salvation. I might here spend time in showing how much preparatory learning and study are requisite to such a knowledge of the Bible as he ought to possess, who undertakes to be an expositor of its truth. But I will pass all this over, as sufficiently evident, and proceed to make some observations on the important duty of “rightly dividing the word of truth.”

1. The truths of God's Word must be carefully distinguished from error. Light and darkness are not more opposite than truth and error. In some cases, error comes forth into the open light of day, in its native deformity, avowing its hostility to the word of God, and professing it as its object to subvert the Holy Scriptures, under the pretext of delivering the world from bondage, and obtaining liberty for men to live as they list. With regard to this species of error, there is no need of much skill to run the line of division between it and truth. Every honest mind can at once perceive the wide difference; and, as for those who have pleasure in unrighteousness, it is often the judgment which they incur from a just God. It has often been observed, that infidels are as incapable of *perceiving* as of *loving* the truth. But some-

times error assumes the garb, and uses the language of truth. Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light; no marvel, therefore, that error and falsehood should wear a disguise fitted to deceive the unwary, and, if it were possible, the very elect. In all ages of the world, false teachers have existed, and often abounded. False Apostles, false prophets, deceitful workers, have ever been the pests of the Church of God, under every dispensation. And the earth is still inundated with floods of error. Through pride and licentiousness, men of corrupt minds still endeavor insidiously to sap the foundation of Gospel truth; the time is come when many will not endure sound doctrine. Here the skilful workman must be on the alert. Here all his wisdom must be put in requisition, to detect, expose, and refute every form of error and heresy which may arise. By his skill, fidelity, and vigilance, the tender flock of Christ must be preserved from "wolves in sheep's clothing." By a clear exhibition of Gospel truth, on all the important points of religion, the people should be so instructed, and so imbued with the truth, that error shall make no impression on them. Error is a creeping pestilence; no error can promote holiness. The connection between truth and holiness is most intimate and indissoluble.

2. But it is necessary to divide the truth not only from error, but from philosophy, and mere human opinions and speculations. Many who do not reject the truth, yet so cover her with robes of their own weaving, that she cannot be seen in her

lovely simplicity. They are forever connecting with the doctrines of God's Word, their own wire-drawn and uncertain speculations. We have too much metaphysical reasoning in our theology. The truth of God is not illustrated by such methods; it is rather obscured and adulterated. Thus, it often happens, that a sermon contains very little Scripture truth. After the text is uttered, the preacher has done with the Bible, and the hearers are fed, or rather starved, by some abstruse discussion of a subject, not treated of in the word of God; or which is there taken for granted as a thing which requires no discussion, or which is above the human intellect. Now, whether these speculations are true or false, is of little consequence; for they serve neither to confirm our faith, nor to strengthen our love to God and man. This is not the pure wheat of the divine word; it is chaff, and "what is the chaff to the wheat?" This is not rightly to divide the word of truth. The spiritual workman must take pains to separate the word of God from all admixture of mere human philosophy, and metaphysical speculation. It is the "sincere milk of the Word" after which the new-born child of grace thirsts, and by which he grows.

3. The skilful workman must be able to distinguish between fundamental truths, and such as are not fundamental. All Bible truth is important, and no part to be rejected or neglected. But some truths must be known and believed, or the person cannot be saved; while there are other truths

which true Christians may be ignorant of, and while ignorant may deny. There are two grand marks of fundamental doctrine. 1. That the denial of them destroys the system. 2. That the knowledge of them is essential to piety. All truth is essential to the perfection of the system; fundamental truths, to its existence.

4. Rightly to divide the word of truth, we must arrange it in such order, as that it may be most easily and effectually understood. In every system some things stand in the place of *principles*, on which the rest are built. He who would be a skilful workman in God's building, must take much pains with the foundation; but he must not dwell forever on the first principles of the doctrine of Christ, but should endeavor to lead his people on to perfection in the knowledge of the truth.

5. A good workman will so divide the word of truth, as clearly to distinguish between THE LAW AND THE GOSPEL; between *the covenant of works* and *the covenant of grace*. No mistakes in religion have been more frequent or more fatal, than those which relate to the terms of a sinner's acceptance with God, or the true method of justification. These mistakes are the more to be dreaded, because they seem to have the sanction of reason, which dictates that a just God will treat men according to their works. Upon a superficial view, it would seem as if the doctrine of grace, or justification by faith alone, was unfriendly to holiness. More than one-half of the Christain world, therefore, are misled by error, more or less dangerous, on this point

of vital importance. Some are so blinded to the deficiencies of their own righteousness, that they place their whole dependence on their own good deeds: while others are willing to compromise the matter, and if their own merit may be permitted to come in for a principal share in the honor of their salvation, they are willing that Christ should obtain the second place, and that by his merits their own small deficiencies should be covered. By a correction of error on this point of doctrine, Luther began the reformation, and called it *the article of the standing or falling of the Church*. And this was correct, for an error here vitiates the whole theology of the man who holds it; and the minister who does not clearly preach the doctrine of justification by faith in the righteousness of Christ, though he be as learned as Paul, or as eloquent as Apollos, is not such a workman as needeth not to be ashamed. Such a one can never rightly divide the word of truth. If he miss the mark on this cardinal point, you will find him bewildered, and bewildering his hearers everywhere else. The Gospel in his mouth will give no distinct and intelligible sound, but will be a vague and confused report; and if he *essentially* err, in regard to the method of a sinner's justification, he brings himself under the anathema of Paul for preaching another gospel—which, however, is not another, for it brings no good news to lost sinners; but sets men at work to get into paradise at the old gate, which was long ago shut up, and has for thousands of years been guarded by the fiery-flaming sword of

Divine justice. Here, again, men are prone, when driven from one error, to fly to the opposite; or rather in shunning one extreme to run upon the other. For while some seek salvation by the works of the law, others deny that we have anything to do with the law, and actually "by faith make void the law," pretending and teaching that the obligation of the moral law has ceased, since Christ has obeyed it in our stead. Now, this antinomian leaven is a sweet morsel to the appetite of the carnal professor; for he loves safety and ease, but hates self-denial and holy living. Others again talk of a *new law* for Christians, which they call the law of liberty or sincerity, because it does not condemn for every transgression, as does the moral law, and does not require absolute perfection in our obedience, but is satisfied with sincerity; just as if God could change the requisitions of his law without changing his own nature, or as if it were not most absurd to suppose that any law could require less than perfect obedience to its own precepts. But we hear from another quarter that the minister of Jesus should preach *free grace*, and finished salvation, but not utter the thunders of the law, and thus produce a spirit of bondage by bringing back the terrors of Sinai. Such persons may suppose that they are the only friends of free grace; but that minister who ceases to exhibit the holy law of God in its spirituality, extent, and binding obligation, may cease to preach the Gospel also; for where there are none sick, there will be no need of a physician; and where no law is preached, there will be no convic-

tion of sin, and none crying out "what must we do to be saved?"—so that it is most evident the law must precede the Gospel in the sinner's experience, and also in rightly dividing the word of truth. I do not mean to sanction the absurd practical error, that for a time, and it may be a considerable time, the Gospel should be withheld from the people. For what is this but to usurp the prerogative of God? In any audience, who can tell but there may be at least one convinced sinner, who needs instantly the consolations of the Gospel? And they who have already believed, need continually the sprinkling on their heart and conscience of the same blood which at first gave them peace. Let no minister of Christ, therefore, presume to keep back, during a single sermon, the precious Gospel of Jesus Christ, which, probably, some poor sinner is hearing for the last time. Who that has read the Acts of the Apostles, does not know that days and weeks are not necessary for the conversion of a soul by Almighty grace? Conviction by the law, and reconciliation by the Gospel, may sometimes take place in a few minutes. The spiritual workman, therefore, who wields the two-edged sword of the Spirit, must so direct and manage this weapon of proof, as to render it most efficient in penetrating between the joints and marrow; yea, between the soul and the spirit, so that the very thoughts of the heart may be made manifest.

Let the law be faithfully proclaimed, as binding on every creature, and as cursing every impenitent sinner; and let the utter inability of man to satisfy

its demands be clearly set forth, not as an excuse, but as a fault; and then let the riches of grace in Christ Jesus be fully exhibited and freely offered, and let all—however great their guilt—be urged to accept of unmerited pardon, and complete salvation.

6. Another thing very necessary to a correct division of the word of truth, is that the promises and threatenings contained in the Scriptures be applied to the characters to which they properly belong. How often do we hear a preacher expatiating on the rich consolations of the exceeding great and precious promises of God, when no mortal can tell, from anything which he says, to whom they are applicable. In much of preaching, there is a vague and indiscriminate application of the special promises of the covenant of grace, as though all who heard them were true Christians, and had a claim to the comfort which they offer. This is not a skillful division of the word of truth. In such a division, the saint and the sinner are clearly distinguished by decisive scripture marks; so that every one may have a fair opportunity of ascertaining to which class he belongs, and what prospects lie before him. Rightly dividing the word of truth includes, therefore, what may be termed *characteristical* preaching—that is, a clear and just delineation of character, by using the pencil of inspiration. For if, in this business, men follow their own fancies, and lay down marks of piety not authorized by the Word of God, they will often cry peace to those to whom God has not spoken peace, and will

give unnecessary pain to the children of God by obscuring their evidences, and perplexing their minds with fears and scruples by a false representation of the true characteristics of genuine piety. It is much to be regretted that this accurate discrimination in preaching has gone so much out of use in our times. It is but seldom that we hear a discourse from the pulpit which is calculated to afford much aid to Christians in ascertaining their own true character; or which will serve to detect the hypocrite and formalist, and drive them from all their false refuges. In the best days of the reformed churches, such discriminating delineation of character, by the light of Scripture, formed an important part of almost every sermon. But we are now more attentive to the rules of rhetoric than to the marks of true religion. How do Owen, Flavel, Boston, and Erskine abound in marks of distinction between the true and false professor? And the most distinguished preachers of our own country—the Mathers, Shepards, Stoddards, Edwardses, as also the Blairs, Tennents, Davies, and Dickinsons, were wise in so dividing the word of truth, that all might receive their portion in due season. But certainly the word of truth should be so handled, that every person who does not turn away his eyes may see the lineaments of his true character, reflected from the word, as the image from the glass. This, indeed, requires something more than a fertile imagination and a ready utterance—more than the learning of the schools, or profound critical acumen. It requires that the preacher study much upon his

knees, that he examine his own heart with unceasing care, that "the Word of God dwell in him richly, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;" and also that he converse frequently and freely with experienced Christians. In these matters there are many private persons who are wiser than their teachers; and a preacher, of true humility, will be often glad to learn from those who have had longer or deeper experience than himself. While others are seeking his counsel in regard to their spiritual condition, he is learning from them, for these are lessons which we can best learn from the living subject.

7. But finally, the word of God should be so handled, that it may be adapted to Christians in different states and stages of the divine life; for while some Christians are like "strong men," others are but "babes in Christ, who must be fed with milk, and not with strong meat." Christ taught his disciples as they were able to bear it, and reserved many things which he wished to say, to the time when they were capable of understanding his meaning. The same course was pursued by Paul. We are bound, indeed, "to declare the whole counsel of God," but in due order, at proper times, and with a wise reference to the strength and spiritual attainments of our hearers. We must "keep nothing back which is profitable," but he who is wise to win souls, will judge correctly when, and in what way, particular parts of the system of truth should be inculcated. Christ will not have

the bruised reed broken, nor the smoking flax quenched.

Again, respect must be had to the condition of Christians, as they are found advancing in the divine life, or falling into a state of backsliding and declension. The former should be stimulated to persevere ; the latter should be plucked as brands from the burning. The word of truth ought also to be so divided as to be adapted to the external circumstances of Christians. When in prosperity and honor, they should be admonished *not to be high-minded, but fear ; not to trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us all things richly to enjoy.* They should be exhorted *to rejoice with trembling*, and *to use the world as not abusing it*, and should be reminded that by worldly prosperity, many professors have sunk low in piety, have become infatuated with the gaiety and pageantry of a vain world. Their affections fixed too intensely upon the creature, piety often withers under the sunshine of prosperity, and they become *conformed to the world*, participate in its pleasure, and court its honors. Even the real Christian, in this condition, has a morbid sensibility, which exposes him to take offence at the wounds inflicted by brotherly reproof, and friendly warning. Here the knife of the spiritual surgeon is wanted. A dangerous gangrene has arisen on the inner man, which must not be suffered to grow. Let the faithful warnings of the pulpit ring in the conscience of the professor who exhibits a character so doubtful, and stands in a position so danger-

ous. By fidelity ministers may give offence to their best supporters, and cause them to forsake their ministry; it may be so; it has been so, but he must *approve himself to God*. Whenever a minister of the gospel makes it his chief aim to please men, he ceases to be the servant of God. He must therefore reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long suffering and doctrine. Whether men will hear or forbear, he must be faithful to his Master and to their souls; and must, at every risk, clear his skirts of their blood, "warning every man, and teaching every man, with all meekness."

But God's people are often in affliction, and are led through deep waters. One billow succeeds another in quick succession, until they are almost overwhelmed, and, ready to sink, they cry out of the depths. Or, long-continued judgments press them down, until their spirits are broken with sorrow. "Many are the afflictions of the righteous." "Whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth."

But under all these sorrows he has provided for them refreshing cordials in his Word, that their fainting spirits may be relieved, and their broken hearts healed. These must be administered by the spiritual physician. These disconsolate and afflicted members of the flock are those who most need the pastor's care. Over these he must exercise a watchful and tender supervision; and however humble their habitation, and obscure their condition, they must be sought out and visited. Here you may see the difference between the man-pleasing, time-

serving preacher, and the humble, faithful man of God ; for while the former is continually courting and flattering the great, and feasting with the rich, the latter is searching for the sheep and lambs of his Master's flock, that he may feed and comfort them, in imitation of the Great Shepherd. He must condescend to men of low estate—remember the poor—visit the sick—and have a word in season for every weary soul ; yea, he must pilot the departing pilgrim over Jordan to the land of promise.

There is a portion for the dying which must not be withheld. When heart and flesh fail, and the spirit is on the wing, and just ready to take her flight into unknown worlds, then must the guide of souls hold up the torch of truth to enlighten her as she passes through the “valley and shadow of death.” Then let the voice of the Great Shepherd be heard in his word of promise, saying, “I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.” “In my Father's house are many mansions ;” “Father, it is my will that where I am, there my disciples may be also, that they may behold my glory.”

The exhortation of Paul to Timothy is to study to show himself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed : and he points out the method by which he might thus meet with the Divine approbation, viz., by rightly dividing the word of truth. What is included in this duty, we have now considered, and will leave the application to those who are interested in the subject. Ministers, who are accustomed to teach others,

ought to be willing to teach themselves also. They who have the skill and fidelity to apply the truth to the consciences of their hearers, should also be faithful to their own souls in detecting and censuring their own failures in time past, and should to the last day of their ministry endeavor to improve in every pastoral qualification, and in fidelity and skill in dividing the word of truth. Many useful inferences might be deduced from this subject, but I forbear to bring them forward, first because I have already consumed as much of your time as is proper; and, again, because I would not trench upon the ground which will more properly be occupied by those brethren who have been designated to take part in this solemn service.

I would conclude by remarking that my own ministry in the Word is coming fast to a close; and one of my greatest consolations is to see younger ministers raised up by the Great Head of the Church, to fill the places of us who must soon leave the stage. I consider the preaching of the Gospel to be the most honorable and important work in the world. The exigencies of the Church now demand ministers of the highest qualifications; and of all qualifications none is so indispensable as deep, unfeigned, spiritual piety—a heart imbued habitually with the Spirit of Christ, and disposed to count all things but loss for his sake; and willing to count not their own lives dear to them, so that they may finish their course with joy, and the ministry received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the grace of God.”

The wise, faithful, and laborious workman may be enabled to say with Paul, shortly before the close of his ministry, "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." Then, indeed, will the Supreme Judge manifest his approbation of all his faithful servants who have rightly divided the word of truth.

A BACCALAUREATE DISCOURSE.

BY

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“ Young men likewise exhort to be sober minded.”—TITUS ii. 6.

THE Epistle of the Apostle Paul to Titus, from which our text is taken, may be considered as a charge to a minister of the gospel as to the manner in which he ought to perform the duties of his sacred and solemn office. In it the Apostle instructs Titus respecting the doctrines which he is to teach, the example which he is to set, and the duties which he is to enjoin on different persons, according to their age and condition in life. To persons of every age and condition, Titus is to preach salvation by the grace of God, through the redemption purchased by our Lord Jesus Christ, and the necessity of holiness of heart and life. Yet the Apostle does not content himself with general precepts of Christian morality applicable to all descriptions of men. He enters into a detail of the sins to be avoided, and of the duties to be performed by persons of different ages and classes in society. There are temptations and sins peculiar to men of different ages and condi-

tions in life. Sin, which is common to all, assumes various aspects from childhood to old age. The same temptations which seduce the young, do not ordinarily affect the aged, or even those in middle life. The rich and the poor, the master and the servant, do not usually commit the same sins. In the verses immediately connected with our text, the Apostle directs Titus to accommodate his instructions to the character of various classes. To aged men and aged women, to young women and to servants, he directs peculiar and specified admonitions and warnings to be given. And in our text, he adds—*Young men likewise exhort to be sober-minded.*

Young men are proverbially rash, impetuous—guided by the impulse of the moment, regardless of consequences; and on this account they need to be exhorted, to reflect, to meditate, to consider, to exercise the attributes of rational and accountable agents, to listen to the voice of God speaking to them in his written word, in the dispensations of his providence, in the experience of those more advanced in years, and in the suggestions of their own conscience.

To be sober-minded, in the sense in which the Apostle uses the expression, does not require young men to be dull, stupid, lethargic, moved by no generous impulse, aiming at no high and noble object, exerting no physical and intellectual power. So far from instructing them to aim at such a listless, inactive, and idiotic state, the Apostle elsewhere exhorts them, as well as others, to be “diligent in business, and fervent in spirit;” to lay aside every

hindrance, and to exert themselves with the vigor and energy of those who strive for the mastery in running, in wrestling, and in whatever men are wont to put forth their highest efforts.

Nor does the term *sober-minded* in the passage before us mean, that young men should be morose, austere, melancholy, averse to all social cheerfulness. In this respect, the teaching of Jesus Christ and his Apostles, unlike that of the ancient Stoics, does not aim to extinguish the passions of men, but to lay them under such restraints, and to give them such a direction as is accordant with the will of Him who made us what we are.

A man may be what the Apostle means by *sober-minded*, and be at the same time a most interesting and pleasant companion.

The original Greek word, σωφρονεῖν, translated *sober-minded*, is composed of two words—the one (σοος or σως) signifying sound, healthful, free from disease; the other (φρον) signifying mind or intellect. And the word composed of these two elements, signifies a sound or sane mind, free from such corrupt bias as would prevent an individual from deciding or acting in a discreet, judicious, and wise manner. The object, then, which the Apostle, inspired by the Holy Spirit, would have young men exhorted to attain, is a discreet, sound, healthy state of mind, free from the infatuation which possesses many of this age, and which sooner or later leads them to ruin. Such I understand to be the meaning of the Apostle—*Young men likewise exhort to be sober-minded*. And in obedience to this injunc-

tion, we shall exhort and endeavor to persuade young men to seek a sound, healthy, and sane mind, free from such prejudices and passions as obscure the intellect, stupify the conscience, and prevent the attainment of high moral excellence.

In most men there is a species of infatuation similar in its effects to intoxicating stimulants. They become unduly excited under the influence of some dominant passion or ruling motive, and they rush on headlong, as if they were blind-folded, until they have approached so near the fatal abyss, that to arrest their progress is impracticable.

What we see every day passing around us, justifies us in saying that this infatuation is more common, as well as more fatal, in young men than in any other. In whatever way we may account for the fact, we see many young men acting as if they were bereft of their senses, as well as destitute of reason. The winged insect that sports around a lighted taper in a summer evening, is not more certain to fall a prey to the dazzling object around which it flutters, than these young men are to meet inevitable ruin. Hundreds and thousands in every age, have pursued the same course, and they have fallen victims to their own folly; and yet others rise up and take the same course. They seem to be under the influence of a species of insanity or madness, so that the motives which ought to govern rational beings, have no influence on their conduct. Grasping at the phantoms that flit before their imagination, they lose objects of real and substantial value.

The parable of the prodigal son, recorded in the gospel, is an apt and striking illustration of the character and conduct of many young men. In this parable it is plainly intimated, that the prodigal labored under a species of infatuation—that he was actually deranged; for it is said *when he came to himself*—that is, when he had recovered his reason, and was delivered from the delusion that possessed him, he formed the purpose of returning to his father's house. He then began to think, to reflect, to compare the wretched condition in which he found himself, with the quiet, peaceful, and substantial enjoyments of his father's house. His delusion vanished—*he came to himself*—reason resumed its office, and conscience prompted him, ungrateful as he had been, to return to his duty. *I will arise and go to my father*, was the first rational expression that had escaped from his lips from the time he had left his father's house. How many imitate the folly of the prodigal son, who never come to themselves, and form the purpose to return to their duty, until it is too late! And why is it that young men do not profit by the sad experience of those who have gone before them? Why is it that the loss of health, of property, of reputation, and the certainty of eternal ruin, do not cause them to turn their feet from the path that has led others to a wretched end? It is because they lack that sober, sound, discriminating mind recommended by the Apostle. They suffer themselves to be deluded by the dazzling phantoms created by a heated imagination, and permit their appetites and passions,

and not their reason and conscience, to become their guide.

Young men are beset with temptations from within and from without. Their appetites are keen, their passions strong and easily excited, and objects are daily presented suited to feed the fires within them.

At this age, the animal part of our nature is more fully developed than the intellectual and moral. The immediate gratification of the appetites and passions is too tempting to be resisted. If the first taste of criminal sensual pleasure was as bitter as when the cup is drained to the dregs, it would be rejected with disgust. But it is not so. There is a pleasure connected with the sins which men commit, especially in early life. And the first gratification tempts to a second, and that to a third, until the whole soul is absorbed in the indulgence of some cherished lust or passion.

Moral painters, who have noticed the actings of human nature, are wont to represent the commencement of the paths of vice as strewed with flowers, and those of virtue, at the beginning, as rough, difficult, and laborious. And if it were not so, where would be the temptation to sin? We will admit that there is as high enjoyment in the gratification of the appetites and passions, natural to youth, as the votaries of sensual pleasure may please to affirm—that the pleasure is so exquisite, that it captivates, enchants, and excites the soul even to ecstasy. And what then? It produces that very state of mind which is the most, danger-

ous and ruinous. The animal part of our nature is raised above the intellectual and moral. The order and harmony of the human constitution is deranged, and that part which ought to act in suberviency to the nobler powers becomes predominant, and the wonderful machinery works its own speedy ruin. The songs of the fabled Sirens are said to have been enchanting, and their cup delicious. But the music was intended to decoy the unsuspecting mariner on the fatal rock, and the cup, when tasted, transformed human beings into the lowest and most filthy brutes. I am aware of the excuse or apology which young men offer for indulging their appetites and passions—I have heard it a hundred times; and ninety-nine times in a hundred I have seen in the end that it was utterly false and deceptive. Their self-confidence has been their ruin. They say they have no taste for intoxicating drinks; that they have their appetites and passions under perfect command; that they will be prudent, and will never, except on rare occasions, go beyond certain limits. And what has been the consequence? We have seen these strong men laid low—these prudent men, of firm and unshaken purpose, become so *infatuated* and *enslaved*, that they suffered no opportunity to pass without falling into debasing self-indulgence.

Young men have usually sufficient buoyancy without using artificial means to raise their spirits. Stupid fools may need something to quicken their genius; but, after they have taken the exciting

draught, they are, in the estimation of every one except themselves, fools still.

Few men, under the influence of their cups, have a clearer head, a sounder judgment, or even a more brilliant wit, than when not thus excited. The imagination may indeed be roused; but it is wild, erratic, leading the man to form projects, to execute designs, and to perpetrate crimes which he would not have thought of in his sober moments.

The evil of this sin is, that it prepares the way for the commission of every other sin. No man beforehand can say what he will not do, when under the influence of this maddening and demoniac spirit. Tell me what crime it has not excited men to commit? What obligation it has not violated? What form of human degradation and wretchedness it has not produced?

Within a few years much has been said and much has been done to arrest the progress of this destroyer of human happiness. But still the delusion, which leads young men to immolate themselves on an altar smeared with more blood of human victims than ever stained the cars of Juggernaut, is not dissipated. Many try how far they can go within the verge of the fatal whirlpool, and yet resist its suction; and they direct their frail bark round and round the yawning gulf until resistance is hopeless.

Is that young man of a sound and sane mind who, for the sake of gratifying his taste or of amusing his companions, will go within the limits of the enchanted circle and hazard these dangers?

Through want of more extended observation, young men labor under one great disadvantage. They see the beginning, but they do not see the end. They see the temporary excitement of their companions. All is gayety, and mirth, and social enjoyment. None of the party are habitual drunkards. They look with abhorrence and contempt on the degraded being who is staggering in the street or hanging about the tavern door.

They do not know, or at least they do not consider, that the ruined man, whom they despise, once occupied the same position which they now hold ; that he was once as gay, and as cheerful, and as far from being an habitual drunkard as they are, and that he sincerely thought he could never be reduced to his present debased condition. Confident that he could at any time desist, he advanced step by step, until he is utterly lost.

We have noticed intoxicating stimulants as the first cause of exciting the infatuation of young men, because it is the most common and fatal. But there are other causes. The Prodigal Son, to whose case we have already referred, wasted his substance not *in riotous living* only, but also with *harlots*.

The delicacy of the present age almost forbids us to name this subject before a public audience. It was not so in the teaching of our Lord and his Apostles. They denounced lewdness in all its forms in plain and unequivocal terms. Our boasted refinement is no certain proof that in this respect morals are more pure than in the days of our

Lord and his Apostles. Whatever may be the cause of this extreme sensitiveness, one thing is certain, that this sin has lost none of its moral turpitude and baneful consequences. God has marked his abhorrence of this crime, in the haggard countenance, the decrepit frame, and premature death of its votaries, in the degradation and wretchedness of the female sex, in the mortification and untold agonies of parents and friends, and in the unnatural and horrid crimes to which a desire to conceal their shame, not unfrequently impels its victims. And yet there are young men, who speak lightly, and even boast of this sin, which, if generally prevalent, would rob social and domestic life of all its endearments. The relation of husband and wife, of parent and child, of brother and sister, would lose all their charms—all the sacred ties that bind affectionate hearts would be broken, and our public as well as domestic institutions would be torn into fragments.

It is a delusion, an infatuation of the worst kind, which tempts young men to hazard consequences so appalling. "Let them beware of the smile on the lips, and the roses on the cheeks of the Deceiver, sensual pleasure.—*Her end is bitter as wormwood, sharper than a two-edged sword: her feet go down to death, and her steps take hold on Hell.**"

Gaming is another practice which inflames the blood and fires the brain of some young men, even to desperation and madness.

* Logan.

To persons not initiated into the mysteries of the gaming-table, it, seems strange and unaccountable that rational beings can spend hours and whole nights shuffling cards or rattling a dice-box; that the interest thus excited should become so intense as to exclude from the mind every other thought except that of winning or losing a game depending more on chance and fraud than on dexterity and skill. Such we understand is the fact even when no pecuniary interest is at stake. But when cupidity or the desire of gain is added, as is usually the case, the ardor and intensity of thought and feeling cannot be expressed. The eye is fixed, the lips closed, the breath suppressed, watching the issue of a lucky or unlucky moment. I speak not now of the cold-blooded, heartless, professional gambler who would strip his best friend of the last cent, and leave an amiable woman, and her helpless children, without a crust of bread to eat, or a rag to cover them. I speak of more decent, respectable men, who unhappily have contracted a passion for gaming, and who, unmindful of the claims of a dependent family, hazard all, at the gaming table or horse-race. I speak of young men of respectable family connections, in honorable and confidential employments, who are driven by this fell passion to rob their employers, to betray their trust, to commit forgery, in order to pay what are called debts of *honor*. The penitentiary or suicide not unfrequently closes the drama. Is that young man of

a sound mind who takes the first step towards such a catastrophe?

Let me remark that the same spirit actuates many young men, who are never seen at the gaming table or race-ground, or betting at elections, or dabbling in lottery tickets. I refer to a large class, who neglect the means ordinarily connected with the attainment of a desirable object, and whose prospect of success depends entirely on something in which they have no agency.

Such is the wise ordination of Providence, that certain means are connected with particular ends: so that when the means are neglected, the end is seldom reached.

There are some young men, who have no particular or general object in view, and consequent they employ no thought in selecting means, and make no efforts in pressing forward to an object before them. Like the bubble that floats on the surface of an agitated pool, they move in whatever direction the impulse of the moment drives them. They are literally creatures of chance. The providence of God, which extends to the falling of a sparrow, never comes into their thoughts. Both their temporal and eternal interests, so far as any agency of their own are concerned, is a perfect lottery, and their chance of success, either in this world or in that which is to come, is less than one to a million. Brutes following the blind instincts of their nature, may attain the end for which they were created, but man, without thought and effort wisely directed, cannot.

There are others, who have an object in view, and they are sufficiently ardent in their desires to possess it, but they neglect the means by which it is ordinarily attained. For example; they desire to be rich, and they regard industry and economy, the old fashioned way of acquiring wealth, as too slow and plodding; they must reach the object at a single bound. They enter into wild speculations, and commence an expensive style of living. Our country, at the present time, presents too many examples of such folly and madness. The humble and useful employments of agriculture and the mechanical arts are despised and abandoned; every young man must needs be a gentleman; that is, he must not stain his hands, nor soil his clothes with manual labor. Few young men at the present time, like Roger Sherman and Benjamin Franklin, pursue with diligence an honest and laborious occupation, while they seize every leisure moment to store their minds with useful knowledge.

Again; there is another class of young men, who, in the providence of God, are placed in such circumstances, that they might devote their whole time to the improvement of their minds, and to the duties of a liberal profession. They, too, hope to reach the temple of fame, not by such means as Cicero and Demosthenes and others employed, but borne on the wings of their genius, or wafted by some propitious breeze, they hope, without effort, to reach the heights to which others have climbed by gradual and laborious steps, and when sad experi-

ence has dispelled the delusion, we see them with wasted estate, unfit for any useful employment, begging some humble public office, or what is worse, washing from their minds, in the grog-shop, the remembrance of their early folly. How far the course of reading pursued by the class of young men described, tends to form their character, and to determine their fate, is a matter worthy of serious consideration. It does seem to me that the novels and romances, and licentious poetry, found on their tables, and occupying the time that ought to be devoted to grave and laborious studies, have no small influence in inflaming the imagination, kindling the passions, and in forming that insignificant and worthless character manifested in future life.

Once more ; the company with which a young man associates is another means of perverting his moral sentiments, corrupting his morals, and hastening his progress in the road to ruin. Man is a social being, formed for intercourse with his fellows, and dependent on others for a large portion of his enjoyment. But this blessing, like every other, is capable of being perverted and abused ; so that, in the present state of human nature, there is no more certain means of hastening a young man's ruin, than that of placing him in the society of corrupt associates. Perhaps, no direct attack may be made on his moral and religious principles ; nothing gross and offensive to delicate and virtuous feelings may at first be presented to view ; on the contrary, the manners of his new associates may be fascina-

ting, their attentions kind and courteous, and their whole deportment calculated to impress the mind with the idea of frankness, generosity, and other social qualities. Such companions, if their principles be corrupt, and their practice licentious, are vastly more dangerous than the foul-mouthed and grossly profane profligate ; because the approaches of the one are repulsive, and of the other attractive. The young man who can be pleased with the openly profane and avowedly licentious, is himself already corrupted, and needs no aid to urge him forward in the downward road. But the comparatively innocent may be led astray, when the green path which he is invited to tread is strewn with flowers, and the atmosphere around him is serene and balmy. Let the young man who values his future peace, beware of the smiles and caresses of a fascinating and corrupt companion ; sooner or later, he will sympathize with his associate, imbibe his spirit, and imitate his practice.

When a number of young men are banded together for the purpose of seeking criminal self-indulgence, or of executing any evil purpose, an *esprit de corps* is generated, and no one, however contrary the acts proposed may be to the dictates of his conscience, dares to break ranks. They move forward in a compact phalanx, mutually inspiring each other with confidence, and in their united capacity do acts which the most abandoned among them would not dare to do separately. From this principle it is, that the rush of a mob is as blind and impetuous as the mountain torrent,

sweeping every thing before it, and no one feeling responsible for the outrages on justice and humanity committed. Reason has fled, and the voice of conscience is not heard amidst the shouts of the multitude. Let the young man who wishes to preserve and cultivate a sober and sane mind, beware of entering into a combination to do evil, how plausible soever may be the pretext.

Other causes of infatuating the minds of young men might be mentioned, but we hasten to inquire by what means this delusion may be removed, and the healthy and sane state of mind recommended by the Apostle may be attained. In the first place, we remark, that the young man who would obey the injunction of the Apostle, must pause, consider, and exercise the faculties of a rational being. But how, it may be asked, is this to be done, since this is the very point in which young men are generally deficient? As soon, you will say, as they are brought to think and act in a rational manner, the work is done—they are then sober-minded. We answer, it is true young men are rash, impetuous, and often wild in their opinions, and act as if their minds were infatuated; still they have reason, although it is not exercised in a right way; and they have a conscience, although its voice is not heard amidst the din of their passions and the tumult of the world around them. To these two principles, reason and conscience, imperfect and defective as they are, an appeal must be made. We must *exhort young men to be sober-minded*. And if they will not

listen and weigh the motives presented, they must be left to take their own course, and bear the consequences. And will not those whom we address suspend, at least for a short time, the usual train of their thoughts, and consider whether they have not heretofore been laboring under some fatal delusion!

Our first position which we wish young men seriously to consider is, that sin leads to misery.

The laws of the moral world are as fixed and certain as those of the physical. *Whatsoever a man soweth, that also shall he reap*, is as true in the one case as the other. And here you will notice that this truth does not depend on abstract reasoning—nor is it a truth affirmed by divine revelation without any confirmation from experience.

That *the way of transgressors is hard*, is a fact which we see daily established by visible proofs. What is the result of intemperance, of lewdness, of gaming, of idleness? We need no prophet to announce to us what will be the end of those who become addicted to all, or to any of these sins. We see it in the loss of property, of reputation, of health. We see it in our alms-houses, hospitals, and penitentiaries; we see it in the poverty and wretchedness of helpless families—in the blasted hopes of young men, once of high promise—in the shame and grief of broken-hearted parents. Does not God thus, in the dispensations of his Providence, as distinctly pronounce that his curse rests on such as do these things, as if we heard a voice coming from Heaven saying—"Woe, woe to the in-

fatuated young man who yields himself to the gratification of his sensual appetites and passions." Yet these are the persons who are avowedly seeking pleasure, saying to each other, in all the gaiety of their hearts—"Come, fellows, let us crown ourselves with rose-buds ere they be withered. Let no flower of the spring pass away—let us drink the cup of pleasure, and give care and sorrow to the winds."* Thus far all is well. But let it be remembered that the profane jest and licentious song is the prelude to pain, and lamentation, and woe.

You may say you will enjoy the pleasures of youthful folly, and in mature age you will become *sober-minded*. Let me entreat you to recollect that mysterious and powerful principle of your nature—habit—habit. It has been aptly called a second nature. *The Ethiopian can change his skin, and the leopard his spots, as soon as they who are accustomed to do evil can learn to do well.* And, if through the sovereign grace of God, a change in your character should take place in future life, your repentance will not prevent many of the consequences of your early folly. It will not restore the opportunities of improvement lost in idleness. It will not replace your wasted property, repair your broken constitution, or prevent a premature death occasioned by youthful excesses. You will carry with you to the grave the scars of the wounds received in the service of Satan, as a warning to others not to follow your example.

* Logan.

Thus far we have spoken of such sins as are generally punished in this life. First, because we wished to have something visible and tangible. We wished to show young men, by examples daily presented, that those who indulge in such practices are sinning against their own souls—bringing on themselves, even in this life, certain ruin. Secondly, because we need the aid of motives drawn from self-interest as well as from duty, to restrain men from sins subversive of the order and peace of society, and ruinous to themselves. We have not distinctly pointed out the true source of the malady, nor the only effectual means of restoring men to a sound and sane state of mind.

The real cause of the delusion under which men labor on the subject of duty, lies in the heart—in its alienations from God, the source and pattern of moral excellence. Men do not naturally love God, and regard his authority as supreme. This is the prolific fountain of all the sins which men commit. To remove this malady which lies deep within, there is no effectual remedy except that which God, in sovereign mercy, has provided. Considerations of self-interest and a regard to the happiness of others may induce men to abstain from the commission of gross sins, and to do many things highly laudable and beneficial to mankind. And these motives are not omitted in the Bible, and ought not to be neglected by the ministers of the gospel; but these are not the chief means on which we should rely to restore men to their right mind, and to raise them from their moral degradation.

To the question, *Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?* the Psalmist gives the true answer—*By taking heed thereto according to thy Word*; that is, by making the Word of God the rule of his conduct. This will enlighten his mind in the knowledge of duty, and dispel the delusions which lead many young men astray. Here we are taught what are the attributes and character of the great God, the relation which we bear to him as creatures and sinners, what provision he has made for our redemption from sin and its consequences, what we must do to be partakers of this salvation. Here is a perfect rule of moral duty placed before us, and here are motives calculated to touch the heart and conscience. In this book also we have the promise of that aid, without which all human means, to cleanse the soul from sin, are hopeless; and we are taught how that aid is to be obtained, namely, by prayer to the Father of Mercies for the gift of the Holy Spirit.

If this holy book were diligently studied, and its truths believed, how many errors would it remove from the minds of young men! If its precepts were practised, from how much wretchedness and sorrow would it save them in this world, and with what bright hopes would it inspire them on entering on that which is to come! But see, in the indifference and neglect, not to say the contempt, with which too many young men treat this precious book, the highest proof of their folly and madness. The grand means which God has provided and appointed to heal the diseases of their

minds—to purify their hearts—to guide their steps in the slippery paths of youth, to secure their happiness in this world and in the next, is despised and neglected! The book which informs you that God gave his only begotten Son to die for your salvation is thrown aside, and novels and romances, trash calculated to corrupt your minds and inflame your passions, already too ardent, are sought and read with eagerness. If any such hear me, I pray God to give you a better mind—to teach you that both your interest and your duty require you to *take heed to your ways according to the Word of God.*

YOUNG GENTLEMEN OF THE SENIOR CLASS:

To what I have already addressed to you in common with others of the same age, I have only a few words to add.

Permit me to remark, that if at any period of your lives you need the exercise of a sound and sane mind, it is now in the circumstances in which you stand. Having finished your academical studies, you are now to go forth into the world, and to be exposed to many trials and temptations.

I take it for granted that none of you, after the advantages which you have enjoyed, will bury your talents; that you will select some useful employment or profession, and will pursue it with diligence. The selection of a profession or occupation is one of the most important acts in the life of man. On a judicious choice in this matter, your success and happiness during life greatly depend. In this point many fatal mistakes are made. We

have known young men who had talents well adapted to a particular calling, and who, through pride, ambition, or the desire of wealth, selected another for which they were not qualified; and disappointment, mortification, and disgrace were the consequence.

In making your selection will you not need the exercise of a sober, discreet, and sound mind? And in deciding to what department of business you shall devote your lives, many circumstances are to be taken into view. Can this be done rashly, without thought and sober reflection?

Let me tell you, that it is not always what business or profession is likely to be the most profitable or honorable, that ought to determine your choice—but rather in what department you can be the most useful and answer the great end for which you were made, namely, to “glorify God and to enjoy him forever.” The young man, who leaves out of view this important consideration, errs in the very commencement of his career.

On this subject let me also remark, that a young man ought not to delay long, before he decides what shall be the main business of his future life. We have known educated young men, who spent years in doubt what they should do; and the effect of this indecision was always injurious to their character and success in life. I have often been asked the question, whether a young man, who has selected his profession, should commence studies preparatory to that profession immediately on leaving college, or should devote a year or two to general

reading and improvement. My past observations would lead me to say, commence your professional studies as soon as practicable. I have seldom seen much improvement made by private desultory reading. Spend the longer time in preparation for your profession, and fill up your hours of relaxation with collateral reading. This course will tend to bring all you read or observe to bear on the great business before you, and enable you to collect materials from all quarters conducive to your main object.

In the preceding discourse, I have pointed out some of the rocks on which many precious youths have been lost; and I beseech you, by all your hopes in time and eternity, not to approach those coasts whitened with the bones of thousands. Your fate will be similar to that of those who have gone before you. Such is the wise and just appointment of the Author of our being, that from the penalty of his wise and immutable laws there is no escape.

From marking the course of many young men, I am led to the firm opinion that more fail to answer the expectation of their parents and friends from the want of moral character than from the want of talents. And did the occasion permit, we could prove from the nature of things as well as from a detail of facts, that this *must* be so.

Independent of the influence of regular habits on your success in life, sound principles and pure morals ought, on their own account, to be sought and cherished. The chief dignity and glory of

man consists not so much in the extent of his knowledge, the vigor of his intellect, and the splendor of his achievements, as in the integrity of his heart, the purity of his morals, and in his paramount regard to the claims of duty. The most malignant and odious being in the universe may have vast intellectual powers, and may excite our admiration and terror, but he cannot inspire us with confidence and love. But the good man who aims to do what is right—who employs his talents, whether great or small, in faithfully performing the duties arising from the various relations of life, “is the noblest work of God.”

Beware, my young friends, of imbibing that erroneous opinion, confidently asserted and zealously propagated by men destitute of moral principle, that wildness, eccentricity, and licentious manners in youth, is an evidence of genius and of high promise in future life—that the government of the passions and a regard to the rules of moral order is a proof of dulness and insignificance. It is false, abominably false. That some men of splendid talents, who were profligate in youth, have risen to high distinction in after life, is freely admitted. But their early excesses were no indication of their future greatness; their dissipation retarded rather than hastened their elevation.

Where is the wretch so stupid, so brainless, that he cannot curse, and drink, and game, and give full scope to every low, sensual passion? And do young men hope that by imitating the vices of great men, they also are to become great? Rather let

them expect by such means to sink to a level with the lowest and meanest of our race.

Young men, be *sober-minded*. At this interesting period of life, act prudently, act wisely. Remember you are now sowing the seed of the future harvest—it may be precious grain to be gathered in due season into the granary above, or it may be tares to be burnt with unquenchable fire. As rational and moral beings you are accountable to God for your conduct; and if you would secure his favor and rise in the beauties of holiness to the true dignity of your nature, you must repent of your sins, and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, who is exalted at the right hand of God, to give repentance and remission of sins. The gospel method of making men good, and holy, and fit for heaven, far excels every other. It is adapted to the sinful condition of man—suited to heal the diseases of the mind and of the heart. The belief of the doctrines, and the practice of the precepts of the Gospel, is the only effectual means of enabling a young man to cleanse his way, to escape the pollutions of the world, and to prepare for heaven. Take this Gospel as the rule of your life, the foundation of your hopes, and the charter of your immortal inheritance. Did I know that you all had made your peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, I could bid you adieu with a heart full of joyful hopes respecting your future welfare. Then whatever ills may befall you in life, your eternal well-being is secure. Once more I say, Young men, be *sober-minded*; and, in the sincerity of your hearts,

let each one, addressing his Father in Heaven, say—
Father, from this time wilt not thou be the guide
of my youth? The Lord hear your prayer, and
bless you. Amen.

FAITH IN CHRIST THE SOURCE OF LIFE.

BY

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"The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."—GALATIANS ii. 20.

THE churches in Galatia were founded by the Apostle Paul. He had appeared among them in much weakness. There was something either in his personal appearance, or in his external circumstances, which tended to excite contempt. But the Galatian converts did not on that account reject him, but received him as an angel of God, and even as Christ Jesus. This devotion to him, and to the gospel which he preached, was very short-lived. He begins his epistle to them by expressing his astonishment that they had so soon turned unto another gospel. It is plain from the course of his argument, that this apostacy was Judaism. The Galatians had been induced to live after the manner of the Jews, to consider circumcision and keeping the law necessary to salvation. Paul's object is to convince them that this apostacy, if persisted in, must be fatal. There are but two methods of salvation—the one by the law, the other by grace—the one by works, the other by faith. These

methods are perfectly incompatible. They cannot be combined. The adoption of the one is the rejection of the other. Salvation must be wholly by works, or entirely by grace. Paul, therefore, says:—"I testify to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Christ is become of no effect to you; whosoever of you are justified by the law, ye are fallen from grace." By adopting the legal, you have rejected the gracious method of justification. It was his deep conviction, both from the revelation of God, and his own experience, that the law, in none of its forms, could give life. Neither the Mosaic institutions nor the decalogue, neither ritualism nor morality could avail to restore sinners from death to the life of God, and life with God. The law, he argues, cannot free us from condemnation, because we are sinners, and it is the very province of the law to condemn sin. How can we be justified by that which condemns? Neither can the law give spiritual life. It can only present the form of knowledge and truth. It cannot change the heart. On the contrary, it exasperates its opposition by the extent of its inexorable demands, so that it slays, instead of giving life. Paul says, he found the law which was ordained unto life, to be unto death. What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God has accomplished by the gospel. He has set forth his Son as the author of life, as the redeemer from judicial death, and the giver of inward spiritual life. There are two indispensable conditions on which our interest in his

salvation is suspended. The one is, the renunciation of the law, or of the legal method of salvation; and the other is, union with Christ, so that we become partakers of the merit of his death, and the virtue of his life. I am dead to the law, says the Apostle, I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless, I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

The doctrine of this passage is, that faith of Christ is the necessary condition and source of spiritual life.

By faith of Christ is not meant the faith which Christ had. The faith which is the life of the soul, is not mere belief of the existence of God, and of those great moral and religious truths which are the foundation of all religion. Those who would bring revelation down to the level of philosophy, and resolve all its doctrines into truths of the reason, tell us that all the Bible means when it says we are saved by faith and not by works is, that confidence in God, and in moral and religious truth, is not only the source of virtue, but the test of character. What a man is, is determined more by this habitual state of mind, than by individual and outward acts. When it is said, Abraham was justified by faith, they would have us understand that it was his inward posture of mind toward God that was approved and recognised as the source of all true piety. Here, as in most other cases, error is negative. The evil lies not in what is affirmed,

but in what is denied. It is true that faith in God is the principle of all religion; but it is far from being true that this is the whole import of the scripture doctrine of salvation by faith. It is characteristic of the doctrines of the Bible, that they comprehend all that is true in other forms of religion, while they contain a divine element to which their power is due, which is to be found nowhere else. The faith, therefore, by which the Christian lives, is something more than mere faith in God.

Neither does the faith of Christ, of which our text speaks, mean faith in that unseen world which Christ has revealed. It is, indeed, true that the life of the Christian is regulated by the objects of faith, as distinguished from the objects of sight. It is true that he walks by faith, and not by sight; that he looks not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. It is true the Christian has a faith which is the evidence of things not seen, and the substance of the things hoped for. It is true that faith, as the organ of perceiving what neither sense nor reason knows, as the cognition of the things of the Spirit, does regulate the Christian's life, determine his conduct, sustain him in trial, comfort him in affliction, and open for him the perennial fountain of life. Still this is not all the Scriptures teach on this subject; nor is this the doctrine which they mean to inculcate, when they teach that we are saved by faith; and when they represent faith as the source of spiritual life to the soul.

Neither is the truth in question either exhausted

or accurately stated by saying, the faith which has this life-giving power has the whole word of God for its object. It is, indeed, admitted that faith has respect to the whole revelation of God. It receives all his doctrines, bows to all his commands, trembles at his threatenings, and rejoices at his promises. This, however, is not the faith by which the Apostle lived; or, rather, it is not those acts of faith which have the truth of God in general for their object, which gives life to the soul. The doctrine of the text and of the whole New Testament is, that the soul is saved, that spiritual life is obtained, and supported, by those acts of faith which have Christ for their object. Other things in the Word of God we may not know, and, therefore, may not consciously believe, but Christ we must know. About other things true Christians may differ; but they must all agree as to what they believe concerning Christ. He is in such a sense the object of faith, that saving faith consists in receiving and resting on him alone for salvation, as he is offered to us in the gospel. It consists in receiving Christ—*i. e.*, in recognising, acknowledging, accepting, and appropriating him, as he is held forth to us in the Scripture. It includes, therefore, a resting on him alone for salvation—*i. e.*, for justification, sanctification, and eternal life.

That this is the true doctrine on the subject is plain, from the common form of expression employed in Scripture when the Bible speaks of faith in connection with justification and life. It is not of faith as general confidence in God, nor faith as

assent to divine revelation, but specifically "faith of Christ," that is, faith of which Christ is the object. Thus the Apostle, in the earnest and important passage whence the text is taken, and in which he condenses the whole substance of the gospel, says three times over, that the only method of obtaining justification and life, is by those acts of faith which terminate on Christ. In the third chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, from verse 21 to the end, where we have another of those condensed exhibitions of the gospel, the same form of expression occurs. We are said to be saved by "the faith of Christ." So, too, in that remarkable passage, Phil. iii. 1—14, in which he contrasts the two systems—the legal and evangelical—Judaism and the gospel, he ascribes the power of the latter to secure justification and life to "the faith of Christ." The same doctrine is taught in all those passages in which we are required to *believe in Christ* in order to salvation. The specific act which is everywhere declared to be essential, is to believe on the Son of God. He that believeth on the Son, it is said, hath life; he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him. The Apostle John insists much on this point. Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God. Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved, is the message which the Gospel brings to every creature. This doctrine is taught, also, by all those passages which declare

Christ to be our life. It is by union with him we live. Our life is hid with Christ in God. It is not we that live, but Christ that liveth in us. The life which we now live in the flesh is by faith of the Son of God. The whole scheme of redemption is founded on this truth. Men are dead in trespasses and sins. They cannot be delivered from this state by any works or efforts of their own. Neither can they come to God without a mediator. Christ is the only medium of access; therefore faith in him is the indispensable condition of salvation. Whatever else we may believe, it will avail us nothing unless we exercise faith in Him; and, therefore, the specific act which sinners are called upon to perform, is to come to Christ; to look to him; to flee to him as a refuge; to lay hold on him as a helper; to confide in him as the propitiation for their sins; to commit themselves to him as their High Priest. In all these, and in many other ways, are we clearly taught that Christ is the immediate object of that faith which is connected with life and salvation. This is so plain and so important that our Catechism defines the faith which saves the soul to be that grace, whereby we received rest on Christ alone for salvation, as he is offered to us for salvation. It is not, therefore, by faith in God as God, nor by faith in divine revelation; but by faith in Christ, that is, by those acts of faith which have him for their immediate object, that the soul is freed from condemnation, and made partaker of divine life.

But what is meant by faith in Christ? What

are those truths concerning Christ which we are required to believe? Thanks be to God for the distinctness with which this all-important question is answered in his word. We have that answer summed up in the passage before us. There are three things which we must believe, or our faith is dead,—First, *That Christ is the Son of God.* Second, *That he loves us.* Third, *That he gave himself for us.*—All these are essential elements in that faith which gives life to the soul.

First, We must believe that Christ is the Son of God. Both the divinity and incarnation of the object of our faith are included in this expression. The designation, Son of God, is applied in Scripture to the divine nature of Christ, and implies his essential equality with God. God is in such a sense his Father that he is equal with God, of the same nature or substance, possessing the same attributes, bearing the same titles, performing the same works, and entitled to the same confidence, obedience, and worship. In this light He is set forth as the object of hope in the Old Testament. In this light He exhibited himself when he appeared on earth, teaching in his own name, working miracles by his own power, claiming for himself the love, confidence, and obedience due to God alone, asserting his power to save all who come to him, promising to raise the dead, and foretelling his coming to judge the world at the last day. These claims were authenticated by the manifestation of the glory of God in his character and life, so that those who were with him beheld his glory as of the only

begotten Son of God, and knew He was indeed the true God and eternal life. God confirmed these claims by a voice from heaven, saying: "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased;" by the works which he gave him to do, and by raising him from the dead, thereby proclaiming with power that he was the Son of God. The Apostles received, worshipped, and preached him as the true God. They proclaimed themselves and all their fellow-Christians to be the worshippers of Christ, and the great object of their mission (as it is to this day the great end of the ministry) was to bring men to know, worship, and obey Christ as God. It is, therefore, one of the essential elements of faith in Christ to believe in his divinity. This, however, necessarily includes faith in his incarnation, because all the designations applied to Christ belong to him as an historical person. Jesus Christ is the name of a person who was born of the Virgin Mary, who suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried, who rose again on the third day, ascended into heaven, and is now seated at the right hand of God. Everything taught concerning Christ, is taught concerning that person. He, that is, the person who was thus born, who thus suffered, died, and rose again, is the Son of God, that is, a divine person. This, of course, supposes that He became flesh and dwelt among us. Faith of the Son of God is, therefore, necessarily faith in the incarnation. It is faith in Christ as God manifest in the flesh. This is so prominent and so important an element in saving faith, that it may be said to in-

clude all others. Hence the Apostle says: "Who-soever believeth that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God;" and, "Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is of God." That faith, therefore, which has power to give life, has the incarnate God for its object. It contemplates and receives that historical person, Jesus Christ, who was born in Bethlehem, who lived in Judea, who died on Calvary, as God manifest in the flesh. Any other faith than this is unbelief. To believe in Christ, is to receive him in his true character. But to regard him, who is truly God, as a mere creature, is to deny, reject, and to despise him. It is to refuse to recognise him in the very character in which He is presented for our acceptance. If this truth be hid, "it is hid," says the Apostle, "to them that are lost; in whom the God of this world hath blinded the eyes of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined into our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." Saving faith, then, is the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. It is perceiving and recognising him to be the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his substance. This is that knowledge for which Paul said he was willing to suffer the loss of all things; and which our blessed Lord himself declared to be eternal life.

The necessity of faith in the divinity and incarnation of our Lord, to the saving power of faith, is further plain, because a Saviour less than divine, is no Saviour. The blood of no mere man is an adequate atonement for the sins of the whole world. The righteousness of no creature is an adequate foundation for the justification of sinners. The assurance of the gift of eternal life is mockery from any other lips than those of God. It is only because Jesus is the Lord of Glory, the Son of God, God manifest in the flesh, that his blood cleanses from all sin, that his righteousness is infinite in value, sufficient to cover the greatest guilt, to hide the greatest deformity, and to secure even for the chief of sinners admission into heaven. The ranks of angels give way to allow any one to enter and ascend, who appears clothed in the righteousness of God. Yes, the righteousness of God; and any righteousness short of his, would be of no avail. Faith draws her power to give life to the soul; to free from the sentence of death; to speak peace to the troubled conscience only from the divine character of its object. It is only an almighty, an ever present, an infinite Saviour, who is suited to the exigencies of a ruined immortal.

It must also be remembered, that it is to the spiritually dead to whom Christ is declared to be the author of life. But no creature is life-giving. It is only He who has life in himself that is able to give life unto others. It is because Christ is God; because all the fulness of the Godhead dwells in him, that he is the source of spiritual life to us.

God only hath life in himself, and all creatures live in him. If, therefore, Christ is our life, he must be our God.

Spiritual life, moreover, supposes divine perfection in the object on which its exercises terminate. It is called the life of God in the soul, not only because God is its source, but also because He is its object. The exercises in which that life consists, or by which it is manifested, must terminate on infinite excellence. The fear, the admiration, the gratitude, the love, the submission, the devotion, which belong to spiritual life, are raised to the height of religious affections only by the infinitude of their object. It is impossible, therefore, that the soul can live by the faith of the Son of God, unless it believes him to be divine. It is the exhibition of divine perfection in the person of Jesus Christ, through the power of the Holy Ghost, that calls forth, in the benumbed and lifeless soul, the aspirations and outgoings of the spiritual life. It is the glory of God as thus made known, thus softened, and brought down to our apprehension, and revealed in its manifold relations to us, that brings us into that communion with the divine nature in which our life consists. Nothing is more clearly taught in Scripture than that Christ is the object of the life of God in the souls of his people. He is the object of their supreme love, of their adoration, of their confidence, of their devotion and obedience. The whole New Testament is a hymn of praise to Christ. The whole Church is prostrate at his feet; and whenever heaven has been opened to

the eyes of mortals, its inhabitants were seen bowing before the throne of the Lamb. To live by faith of the Son of God, therefore, is to live by believing him to be divine. The faith which gives life to the soul, is the cognition, or spiritual apprehension of the glory of God in the person of Jesus Christ. Without this, faith is dead, and the soul turns its leaden eye on an eclipsed sun.

The second great truth we must believe concerning Christ, is his love. It is not enough that we believe he loves others, we must believe that he loves us. Paul said, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved ME, and gave himself for ME. This means, first negatively, that we do not exclude ourselves from the number of those who are the objects of Christ's love. This is really to reject him as our Saviour, while we admit he may be the Saviour of others. This is a very common form of unbelief. The soul under a sense of sin, is disposed to think there is something peculiar in its case; something either in the number or the aggravation of its sins, which makes it an exception. It, therefore, does not believe that Christ loves it. It thinks this would be presumptuous, supposing that to be the object of Christ's love we must be lovely. It forgets the great, salient, life-giving truth of the Gospel, that God loves his enemies, the ungodly, the polluted, and by loving makes them lovely. Alas! Did he not love us, until we loved him, we should perish in our sins. The love of God is the love of a father—it has a hidden source, and is not founded on the charac-

ter of its objects. It is unbelief, therefore, however it may assume the specious garb of humility, to exclude ourselves from the number of those whom Christ loves. So long as we do this we exclude ourselves from His salvation. The second or positive aspect of the truth contained in this part of our text is, that we must appropriate to ourselves, personally and individually, the general assurance and promise of the love of Christ. Faith is not mere assent to the proposition that God is merciful; but trust in his mercy to us. It is not a mere assent to the truth that Christ loved sinners; but it is the appropriation of his love to ourselves; a believing that he loves us. It is not necessary in order to justify this appropriation, that there should be any special revelation that we, as distinguished from others, are the objects of Divine love. The general declaration is made that God is merciful. The general promise is made that he will receive all who come to him through Christ. To appropriate these general declarations, is to believe that they are true, not in relation to others merely, but to us. We credit the assurance of God's love; we look up to him as propitious; we say to him, Our Father; we regard him not as an enemy, but as a friend, for Christ's sake. This is faith. It is precisely because it is so hard to believe that, notwithstanding our unworthiness, God loves us, that the Scriptures are so full of assurances of his mercy, and that so many illustrations are employed to set forth the greatness and freeness of his love. God, it is said, hath commended

his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. This also is the reason why the way in which God can be just and yet justify the ungodly is so distinctly set forth in His word; and why we are exhorted to come with boldness to the throne of grace; to draw nigh with confidence; to come with even the full assurance of faith. This, too, is the reason why we are reprov'd for doubting the mercy of God, for distrusting his promises, or questioning his love. And this is the reason why such blessings are pronounced on those who trust in the Lord. This again is faith. Trusting in the Lord, is believing. It is taking him at his word, when he offers us his mercy, and assures us of his love. There are all degrees of this faith. It may be exercised with an assurance which excludes all doubt, or with a diffidence which scarcely admits of hope. It may alternate with doubt, and be attended with many misgivings. Still the thing believed is, that Christ loves us. When, says Calvin, the least drop of faith is instilled into our minds, we begin to see the serene and placid face of our reconciled Father, dimly and afar it may be, but still it is seen. A man in a dungeon may have no light but through a crevice. Oh! how different is this from the bright light of day. It is, however, light. Thus the feeblest faith and the strongest assurance differ in degree, and not in their nature or their object. The love of God in

Christ is the object of both. The one sees that love glancing through the clouds, or stealing through a crevice; the other sees it as the sun at noon. Still the thing seen, and the act of seeing are in both cases the same.

Faith in Christ, therefore, includes faith in his love towards us. The life of the soul consists in communion with God. There can be no communion with God, without faith in his love. We must believe that he loves us, in order that we should love him. We love God, says the Apostle, because he first loved us. His love is the light and heat which calls our love into being and exercise; and the faith which gives life to the soul, must include the belief that Christ loves us. This is the fountain of life. That a being so exalted and glorious should love us, who are so unworthy and worthless, fills the soul with wonder and gratitude. It calls forth all its activity, and fills it with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

The third element included in the life-giving faith of which the Apostle speaks, is believing that Christ gave himself for us, *i. e.*, that he died for us. This again includes two things—first, faith in his vicarious death as an atonement for sin; and second, faith in his death as a propitiation for our own individual or personal sins. Both of these are necessary. We must believe not only that Christ has made an atonement for sin; but that he died for us, that our sins are washed away in his blood. This is plain, because faith in Christ is the act of

receiving and resting on him, as he is offered in the gospel, for our own personal salvation.

It cannot be necessary to prove before a Christian audience, that Christ is set forth in the gospel as a propitiation for sin, and that faith in him involves the receiving and resting upon him in that character. The Bible clearly teaches on this subject—first, in general terms, that Christ died for us; secondly, that the design of his death was to reconcile us to God; thirdly, that his death accomplishes this design, because it was a sacrifice, or propitiation for sin, or because he bore our sins in his own body on the tree; fourthly, that we are, therefore, justified meritoriously, not by works, but by the blood or righteousness of Christ, and, instrumentally, by faith. These are plain Scriptural doctrines. Faith in Christ, therefore, must include the belief of these doctrines. To regard him merely as a teacher, or merely as a sovereign, or merely as the means by which a new and divine element has been introduced into our nature, is to reject him as a sacrifice for sin. It is to refuse to be saved by his blood. It is not, however, sufficient that we should believe the doctrine of atonement. This angels believe; this devils believe; this millions of our race believe, who yet die in their sins. It is not enough that we should stand as wondering spectators round the cross of Lord of Glory. It is not enough that we should see others wash their robes and make them white in the blood of the Lamb; we must appropriate the merit of his death; we must lay our hand on the

head of the victim; we must have his blood sprinkled on our own conscience; we must accept him as the propitiation of our sins, and believe that God for his sake, is reconciled to us. This is faith indeed! To believe that God, for Christ's sake, is propitious; that he loves us; that he regards us as his children, and has adopted us as his sons and daughters. Until we thus take Christ for our own, we have nothing wherewith to satisfy the demands of the law, or claims of justice; nothing wherewith we can appease a guilty conscience. But being justified by faith, we have peace with God and rejoice in hope of his glory.

He, then, that has the faith by which Paul lived, is able to say with Paul, I believe Jesus is the Son of God, or God manifest in the flesh. I believe he loves me, and gave himself for me. However weak and faltering our faith may be, if we have any saving faith at all, this is what we believe.

If such be the doctrine of the text and of the Scriptures, it answers two most important questions,—First, it tells the anxious inquirer definitely what he must do to be saved. There are times of exigency in every man's experience—times in which the question, what we must do to be saved, must be answered without delay, and with clearness and authority. It is well to have the answer which God has given to this question graven on the palms of our hands. We shall need to read it sometimes when our sight is very dim. In such seasons of emergency, the soul is apt to get confused, and its vision wandering and indistinct. The mind becomes

distracted in the multitude of its thoughts ; it looks inward to determine the character of its own experience ; it looks outward, and with unsteady eye gazes all around for some source of help. The voice of the Son of God on the cross is : Look unto me. The voice of his messengers is : Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved. This is much. But still the anxious question arises—What must I believe ? Here comes the definite answer from the lips of Paul : Believe that Jesus is the Son of God—that he loves you—that he gave himself for you. If you believe this, you will also believe that God for Christ's sake is reconciled to you ; that your sins are forgiven ; that Christ is made of God unto you wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. Do not then, in these hours of trial, allow yourself to be careful and troubled about many things. This is the one thing needful. If you thus believe, your salvation is secure. But must I not be born again in order to enter into the kingdom of heaven ? Certainly you must. Regeneration, however, is something to be experienced. Believing is something to be done. The former is God's work—the latter is yours. Do your part, and you will find that His is already done. When Christ said to the man with the withered arm : Stretch forth thy hand ; he did not wait to ascertain whether his arm was restored before he obeyed, although stretching forth his hand pre-supposed the restoration of his limb. Let not the man, therefore, who is seeking his salvation, be deluded by a false philosophy, and because faith implies re-

generation, refuse to believe until he knows he is regenerated. His simple duty is to believe that Jesus is the Son of God ; that he loved us, and died for us ; and that God for his sake is reconciled to us. Let him do this and he will find peace, love, joy, wonder, gratitude and devotion filling his heart and controlling his life.

The second question answered by the doctrine of the text is: How the divine life in the soul of the believer is to be sustained and invigorated. Paul said the life which he lived, he lived by faith in the Son of God, who loved him, and gave himself for him. The clearer the views we can attain of the divine glory of the Redeemer, the deeper our sense of his love, and the stronger our assurance that he gave himself for us, the more of spiritual life shall we have ; the more of love, reverence, and zeal ; the more humility, peace, and joy ; and the more strength to do and suffer in the cause of Christ. We should then regard all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord. We should glory even in infirmities and afflictions, that His strength might be the more manifested in our weakness. Death would bear a smiling aspect, for we should have a constant desire to depart and be with Christ.

The great duty then inculcated in the text is to look away from ourselves, and to look only unto Christ ; to contemplate him as God manifested in the flesh, loving us, and giving himself for us. The text calls upon us to suppress all doubts of his love as the suggestions of an evil heart of unbelief ; to

cherish the assurance that nothing can separate us from him ; that having loved us while enemies, and died for us while sinners, he will love us unto the end. Believing this, we shall not only have perfect peace, but we shall feel that the entire devotion of our heart and life is the only return we can make for the love of Christ which passes knowledge.

“ Now, unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.”

FILIAL PIETY.

BY

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PROVERBS XXiii. 25.—“Thy father and thy mother shall be glad; and she that bare thee shall rejoice.”

IN urging youth to walk in the paths of virtue and of piety, we cannot err in appealing to their filial feelings, inasmuch as the sacred writers often do this very thing. Respect and love for parents are not, indeed, the motives which operate with the greatest force upon minds renewed by the Spirit of grace and truth. With such the most powerful incentives to action are those which derive their origin from the relation we sustain to God, the author of life and of salvation. Those who have a right apprehension of this relation, and feel most deeply the obligations resulting from it, are also the very persons who appreciate most correctly their indebtedness to parental love and tenderness. For, in their case, not only do the instinctive feelings of love and reverence for father and for mother render us desirous to please and honour those from whom we are sprung, but this very desire is strengthened and even increased by the still stronger one, to please and honour God, who constituted that most intimate and tender relation between

parents and children; and who has enjoined, in terms most explicit, the full discharge of all filial obligations, promising his favor to the obedient, and denouncing his judgments against the rebellious.

Upon these promises and threatenings, it is not my purpose at present to insist, nor shall I dwell upon your obligations; but, assuming that my youthful hearers, notwithstanding any aberrations of which they may be conscious, are not altogether strangers to the joy experienced by those whose constant aim it is to honour and to please their parents, I shall proceed to point out the course you must each one pursue, in order that it may be said to you in the words of our text, "Thy father and thy mother shall be glad, and she that bare thee shall rejoice."

And here, let me request you to call to mind the feelings with which you left your homes for this the place of your education. When, with faltering voice, your father bade you "*farewell*," and unable it may be to express herself in words, your mother bathed your cheek with tears, and in silence parted from the son of her love and of her prayers, did it then enter your mind, that you could ever pursue any course that would give pain to that mother's breast, or disappoint the fond hopes of that kind father? Your purpose, I venture to say, as far as any was formed, was to be a diligent and orderly student, and to repay your father and your mother's love by a strict attention to their advice, and by a virtuous and exemplary deportment. You then

felt that if you could only meet their wishes and expectations, your highest ambition would be satisfied. Were not these feelings right, and pure, and honourable? Would you desire to be freed from them? Would you not rather that they should remain in their full force, and act as a constant stimulant to the performance of duty? Cherish then these feelings, my young friends. Both their direct and indirect influence can be none other than good and pleasant. The very desire to do right is itself a source of pleasure to the mind in which such desire exists; and the pleasure given to others by our correct deportment becomes, in turn, a gratification to ourselves. As it respects some of you, I know that your beloved parents are numbered with the dead. To you I would say, let reverence for their memory prompt you to pursue that course which you know would have gladdened their hearts, had they lived to be witnesses of your conduct.

It is sometimes the case, that an ingenuous youth is more influenced by the recollection of the counsels of a departed father or mother, than he would have been by the same counsels, had that father or mother not been taken from him; and never, in any circumstances, does filial piety appear more lovely and attractive. Whatever, then, be your present relations to your parents—whether they are still spared to watch over your steps and to guide you in the paths of virtue and piety by their example and counsels, or whether they have one or both been removed to the world of spirits—let me, I pray, have your attention while I endea-

your to set before you the course to be pursued by those who would be their parents' joy and crown of rejoicing.

In attempting this, I shall follow the footsteps of the inspired author of our text, and, with him, I exhort you:

I. To cultivate a reverence for parental counsels and authority. "My son," says Solomon, "hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother."—Proverbs i. 8. Again he says, "Hearken unto thy father that begat thee, and despise not thy mother when she is old."—Proverbs xxiii. 22.

The remarks of Bishop Patrick on the first of these passages are worthy of serious thought—"Not only hearken to thy father, when he teaches thee to fear God, but let thy mother's commands be a law unto thee, especially when she bids thee to observe the directions of thy public instructors. The second step to wisdom is, next to God, to bear great reverence to parents, both natural and spiritual; to God's ministers, to whom if children be not bred to give a great regard, they seldom prove virtuous. It is very observable how much human laws differ from the divine; the former only providing that due regard be given by children to their fathers, but taking no notice of their mothers, . . . but God, in his laws, takes care to preserve a just reverence both to father and mother equally."

The laws of thy mother are her admonitions and pious instructions; and these are not to be disre-

garded, even when the infirmity of age is added to that of sex. Hearken unto thy father, and despise not thy mother when she is old, or because she is old. Cherish a reverence for her authority, and never be unmindful of her lessons. At no period of their lives are young persons so tempted to disregard parental authority, as when they are passing from boyhood to manhood. At this time of life, they are often more disposed to think and act for themselves, without regard to the opinions and wishes of their parents, than even in later life. They are desirous to be thought independent, and capable of directing themselves. They become impatient of restraint, and the advice even of parents whom they both reverence and love is often irksome; and is regarded as the offspring of an unreasonable anxiety, or, of an unfounded distrust of their capacity to take care of themselves: and the greater the earnestness of parents in urging their views, the greater often is the resistance on the part of those for whose benefit all this earnestness is employed. They deem it manly to disregard advice, and to act without it, when, if they would only reflect as they ought, they would perceive, that it is the lack of a manly spirit that leads them to pursue the course they do. It is because they have not attained to the stature of full grown men, that they are so sensitive as to every thing that seems to call their manhood into question. None are so jealous of their claims, as those whose claims are most questionable. Show then your claim to be considered youths of a truly noble and independ-

ent spirit, by always daring to do what is right, and by always yielding due obedience to parental commands. I say due obedience, for this obedience so obligatory is yet subordinate to that which you owe to God, and should it unhappily be the case, that the instructions and commands of your parents are in conflict with those of your Heavenly Father, He who is the Parent of us all has the first and highest claim to your obedience; yet in obeying God, in the circumstances supposed, you should at the same time show, that nothing short of the strongest conviction of duty would, ever, have induced you to act contrary to parental instructions. And you should be, in all other things, most careful to consult their feelings, and give them all possible evidence, that it is from no want of due respect for their counsels or authority, that, contrary to their desires, you have yielded to what you deem higher and more imperative obligations; and that it is really your delight to submit to their authority and to meet their wishes to the utmost of your power. Yes, my young friends, never be willing to give your parents one moment's pain, or even to occasion them one moment's anxiety, that you can at all prevent. Of these they have abundant, and that too on your account. Add not to their burdens, much less to their sorrows.

You may sometimes think, that they are unduly anxious respecting you; and they give both themselves and you unnecessary trouble, in warning and counselling you, in telling you of their fears and of your dangers. Grant, my young friends, that a

mother's weakness does sometimes betray itself in this way ; but surely it is not a weakness to be despised. Its very source is that mother's attachment to the son of her love. She has seen the sons of other mothers, as affectionate and tender as herself, decline, step by step, from the paths of piety and virtue, until they have become profligates and outcasts ; and the very thought that her son might possibly become like one of them, prompts her to those expressions of her fears, that sometimes prove so annoying to self-confident youths. Despire not then a mother's fears, however unfounded they may be. Be it your aim to remove them, not by maintaining that there is no ground for them, but by reverently receiving her admonitions, and conforming yourself to them. However much more cultivated your mind may be than hers, or however greater familiarity you may have with learning derived from the study of books, rest assured, that in all that appertains to the cultivation of the moral feelings and the formation of habits, the delicacy and refinement of a virtuous mother are of far greater moment to you, than all that you have ever been able to acquire from books or from intercourse with your equals in years ; and in subjects of this kind your own observation and experience are not to be compared with hers.

Several instances of the happy results of giving due heed to the counsels and instruction of pious mothers are given in the Sacred Scriptures. Witness what the Apostle Paul says of Timothy, and his mother Eunice.

If Solomon be the author of the last chapter of Proverbs, and in it speaks of himself under the name of Lemuel, his history furnishes abundant evidence, that even he would have been a wiser man, and a better ruler than he was, had he followed the instructions given him by his mother, a record of which is made in the chapter named. But the highest of patterns in filial piety is that of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom it was said, that he was subject unto his parents—that is to say, to his mother and to his reputed father—and that he increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man. Remember, too, the command, the first, as the Apostle says, with promise—"Honour thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee." Search all history, inquire of the hoary head, whether an instance can be found of a youth distinguished for filial piety, who ever became a profligate in manhood. If I mistake not, you will seek in vain.

II. My second counsel is, seek with all earnestness after truth.

"Buy the truth, and sell it not," is a direction forming a part of our context.

The language, you perceive, is figurative, and is borrowed from the conduct of merchants, who, to obtain their ends, often make long and dangerous journeys, and that too without any certainty of success, encouraged only by the hope of acquiring wealth, and by the success usually attendant upon skill, enterprise and perseverance. If successful in

getting wealth, they are by no means certain of deriving from its possession the joy and pleasure they anticipated. Not so with the purchase of the truth. Its acquisition ensures the highest enjoyment; and the bare hope of securing it might well call forth all the energies of your soul into the most vigorous exercise. What knowledge so important as saving knowledge—the true knowledge of God? What truth is to be so highly prized, or so eagerly sought for, as the truth that sanctifies, that fits the soul for communion with its God? and the possession of which is an earnest or sure pledge of eternal life?

To how many a father, to how many a mother would it be as life from the dead, could they be assured that you, my young friends, were all earnestly seeking the pearl of great price, ready and desirous to purchase it at any cost—at any sacrifice?

But while the truth of which we speak is the truth of truths, and the knowledge of it to be more highly prized than that of all other truths, yet, in urging you to seek it with all earnestness, I would not have you indifferent to the truths of physical, ethical, or political science—a knowledge of which is intimately connected with your influence and usefulness among your fellow men; nor do I understand the sacred writer, on whose language I am commenting, as intending to limit the application of his words to saving truths, as I shall show more fully when I come to speak of the words that immediately follow the direction to “buy the truth, and sell it not.”

There is another view of truth to which I would

call your attention, that is, to truth as opposed to falsehood, dissimulation and hypocrisy. With the use of the term *truth* in this sense you are all familiar, and of this use of it we have an instance, where St. Paul says, "I speak the truth in Christ, I lie not;" and another in Hebrews x. 22: "Let us draw near with a *true* heart;" that is, "with uprightness, integrity, and sincerity of heart." "Wherefore, putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour."—Eph. iv. 25. No character is more despised among men than that of the liar, and none is more truly contemptible; and in the Sacred Scriptures liars are classed with the vilest of our race, and are threatened with eternal death, as in Revelations xxi. 8: "All liars shall have their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." The judgment of God and judgment of man agree in regard to the hatefulness of lying. Let it, in every form of it, be far from you, my hearers. Let it be your aim to say with the Psalmist, "I hate and abhor lying, but thy law do I love."—Ps. cxix. 163.

The commands of God, the social interests of men, yea, the very existence of civil society call for an unwavering adherence to truth. Never, then, violate the truth. Establish a character for veracity. Let no dread of consequences induce you to err from the truth. Submit to any inconvenience, rather than degrade yourself by lying, equivocating, or by mental reservations; those mean subterfuges of the cowardly and wicked. If ever tempted to prevaricate, call to mind the declarations of Sacred

Writ: "The lip of truth shall be established for ever; but a lying tongue is but for a moment."—Prov. xii. 19. "Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord; but they that deal truly are his delight."—Prov. xii. 22. And should you unhappily be betrayed into doing that which, if known, would subject you to the censure of others, never add to your unhappiness and guilt by a resort to lying, in order to conceal your conduct.

Many indeed are the expedients devised to quiet conscience, and to justify a departure from the direct line of truth; but, at best, they are mere expedients, doing no credit to the hearts or heads of those who use them. The only honourable course is candidly to confess your error, and to express your regret. Let it once be known that nothing can induce you ever to utter a falsehood, the knowledge of this fact will give you a character and a standing which will go far to cast into the shade any indiscretions with which you may be chargeable. Adherence to truth is not, indeed, the only virtue in the world, but where it exists, it is not apt to be alone; and wherever it exists, it commands for its possessor the respect and confidence of all who know him.

Allied to this there is another view of truth, which in this connexion merits our attention: that is, of truth in the sense of fidelity, sincerity, and punctuality in keeping promises, and in this sense it is used in the 100th Psalm: "For the Lord is good, His mercy is everlasting, and His *truth* endureth to all generations." As God is true to his engagements, so he would have us true to ours. Never make a

promise, nor pledge your word, unless you *mean* to do as you promise. To promise and to have no intention to keep it, is the height of hypocrisy; and no matter what excuses the individual who thus acts may offer for his conduct, it is base, and cannot but degrade him in his own eyes as well as in the eyes of others. Far from you be conduct like this. By a faithful compliance with all your engagements, gain for yourselves the reputation of being men true to your word. Such a character is above all price, and the youth that possesses it cannot fail to be the joy of his parents.

III. Seek, also, after "wisdom, instruction, and understanding." This too is the advice of Solomon, who, upon giving it, adds, "the father of the righteous shall greatly rejoice, and he that begetteth a wise child shall have joy of him." And here let me cite from the wise man another saying on this subject: "A wise son heareth his father's instruction."—Prov. xiii. 1. Before urging further a compliance with this advice, let us inquire into the meaning of the terms wisdom, instruction, and understanding, as here used. They are of frequent occurrence in the Sacred Writings, and there is therefore no difficulty in determining their general import; although there may be some in discriminating nicely between them. They are often so blended together, that they seem at least to partake of each other's meaning, and this makes it easier to speak of their joint than of their several imports. Without dwelling at length on the subject, I shall endeavour to do both.

In the Scriptures, the term "wisdom" is used in various senses, all, however, cognate, and naturally arising from each other. Sometimes it is used in its common acceptation among men, as denoting the power of judging rightly—as in 1st Kings ii. 9—distinguished from mere knowledge, as supposing action, and action directed by it; or, as expressed by another—"Wisdom is taken for that prudence and discretion which enables men to perceive what is fit to be done, according to the circumstances of time, place, persons, manners and end of doing.—Eccles. ii. 13, 14. Knowledge directs a man what is to be done, and what is not to be done; wisdom directs him *how* to do things duly, conveniently, and fitly."—Cruden. Again, wisdom is taken for "experience," as in Job xii. 12—"With the ancient is wisdom." And in Acts vii. 22, for "various learning," where it is said of Moses, he was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians—that is, as one explains it, "He was instructed in the knowledge of those arts and sciences, for which, in those times, the Egyptians were famous." Again, wisdom is taken for "true piety, or the fear of God." "The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom." "So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto *wisdom*"—the study and practice of piety. There are other and important senses in which the term wisdom is used in Scripture, yet those mentioned are the only ones to which reference can be had by Solomon, when he says, "Buy *also* wisdom." And they include, as you perceive, both human wisdom to conduct our affairs in this life, and divine

wisdom, to make men wise to know their duty, and to save their souls.

The word rendered "instruction" signifies good and wholesome admonitions and rebukes given to us, in order that we may attain unto wisdom; likewise chastisement; and it is also used to denote that which is set forth as an example for the warning of others. In the passage under consideration, it denotes, I apprehend, chiefly divine admonition and reproof.

The word translated "understanding" means the power or ability to discern between truth and error, between good and evil, and the choosing of the former and the rejecting of the latter. The primitive meaning of the word from which it is derived is to separate, or put apart—hence the significations, to distinguish, to understand, or to know fully and distinctly.

But it is probable that the several terms, wisdom, instruction and understanding, were employed, not so much for the purpose of exact discrimination, as to indicate the earnestness with which they should be sought. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. A good understanding have all they that do his commandments." "Fear God, and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man." From a comparison of these passages, it is evident, that when Solomon bids us buy "wisdom, instruction, and understanding," and, especially, as he at the same time, bids us buy the truth, he had in view that piety and knowledge which fit us for the service of God, and that wisdom which makes us

wise unto salvation. And yet it is more than probable that he did not intend to exclude the knowledge of human arts and learning, as will appear, I think, from an examination of 1st Kings iv. 29-33—"And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding, exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand on the sea shore. And Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of the children of the East, and all the wisdom of Egypt. For he was wiser than all men, than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, and Chalcol and Darda, the sons of Mahol; and his fame was in all the nations round about. And he spake three thousand proverbs, and his songs were a thousand and five. And he spake of trees, from the cedar in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall; he spake also of beasts, and of fowl, and of creeping things, and fishes." He was not only a great prince, but also a philosopher and a poet. These, observe, are all mentioned as evidences of the great wisdom and understanding and largeness of heart that God gave to Solomon; and we may therefore well suppose, that when he extols wisdom, and bids us seek it, and also understanding, he meant to employ these terms in their largest meanings, and as comprehending all varieties of useful knowledge, whether pertaining to religion or to the ordinary affairs of life. They are approved of God, they are held in honour among men. "The wise shall inherit glory."—Prov. iii. 35. "A wise son maketh a glad father, but a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother."—Prov. x. 1. "My son, if thy heart be wise, my heart shall re-

joyce, even mine."—Prov. xxiii. 15. Do not these words express the sentiments of every father?

Be it your aim, my youthful hearers, to make all possible advances in both human and divine knowledge, but especially in the latter. Treasure up also, as far as you can, the lessons of true wisdom, alike on secular as on religious subjects, and seek to be men of understanding. Do you inquire how all this is to be done? I answer it is to be done by making a proper use of your present time and present privileges. For the study of God's Word, a knowledge of which is able, through faith in its teachings, to make you wise unto salvation, you have every facility; and would that the disposition to become thoroughly acquainted with its precepts and its truths was equal to the ready access you can at all times have to its sacred pages.

The rich mines too of human science and learning are, to a greater or less extent, thrown open for your admission; and, just so far as you choose, you are at liberty to avail yourselves of the treasures they contain. You are also provided with guides, whose duty and, I may add, whose pleasure it is, to attend you in your search of the hidden stores of wisdom and knowledge. And there is nothing that ought to draw you away from your professed employments and appropriate work. Do not, for a moment, suppose that you can ever become wise or learned without effort on your own part. God gave wisdom to Solomon just in the same way that he gives it to other men. He gave him the disposition to apply himself earnestly to the cultivation

of those powers of mind which He had previously bestowed upon Solomon, and by affording him opportunities for the full development of those powers. The very account which is given of Solomon is proof positive of his untiring industry.

On this branch of our subject I shall make but one remark more, and it is this: that the study and practice of true piety is no hindrance to the vigorous prosecution of our secular pursuits; but, on the contrary, is favourable to our success in all our lawful undertakings. No mind can be in so favourable a state for attention to the ordinary studies or business of life as when it is conscious of being at peace with God, and of doing all things from a desire to serve and please Him.

“Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding: For the merchandize of it is better than the merchandize of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies; and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her. Length of days is in her right hand; and in her left hand riches and honour. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her; and happy is every one that retaineth her.”—Prov. iii. 13–18.

IV. Let me once more counsel you to seek the company of the wise and good, and to exercise the utmost care in selecting, as your intimate associates, those who are distinguished for sobriety of conduct, and for their reverence for divine things. “He that walketh with wise men shall be wise; but a com-

panion of fools shall be destroyed.”—Prov. xiii. 20. I need scarcely say, that your associations, of whatever kind they be, cannot fail to exert an influence over you; and should they unhappily be evil associations, they cannot prove else than mischievous. If your chosen and constant companions be rude and vulgar, you will become rude and vulgar; if profane, you will become profane; if intemperate and licentious, you will be like them. What reason can any one have to hope for a different result? Whatever other qualities of an attractive character they may possess, and which incline you to seek their company, if not their friendship; these others are not the only ones which will have an influence upon you. Familiarity with wicked sentiments and evil practices will soon remove your own repugnance to these sentiments and these practices; and the way will be more or less rapidly prepared for your becoming like your friends in feeling and in deportment. On the contrary, if your companions be the wise and good, you cannot but receive advantage from the connection. You will imbibe their sentiments, and copy their example, possibly without being conscious of doing so. If, then, you have any desire to gladden the heart of your father, or to be the joy of your mother, you must avoid all corrupt associates, and cleave only to the virtuous and the good. Here, again, let me cite the words of Solomon: “Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away. The path of the just is as

the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. 'The way of the wicked is as darkness. They know not at what they stumble.'

V. Allied to the choice of companions is the choice of books. If they be good, they will tend to make you wise and virtuous; if bad, they will corrupt your minds, and prepare the way for sinful and ruinous courses. Remember that such is the constitution of our minds, that every thing we read makes an impression upon them. It may at first, and even for a long time, be as imperceptible to the eye of the ordinary observer as the impression made upon rocks or stones by drops of falling water; yet, in the course of time, it will become equally apparent and equally lasting.

As is your reading so are you. The youth devoted to the study of science will become a scientific man; the student of works of taste will become a man of taste; the devourer of works of imagination will partake of the character of his reading; if these be works of a corrupt imagination, they will corrupt you. The diligent student of God's word will become wise unto salvation; and let it be your firm resolve to give that direction to all your reading and all your studies, and that alone, which will tend to make you wise and good. Remember the character of the blessed man, as set forth in the 1st Psalm: "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly; that standeth not in the way of sinners; that sitteth not in the seat of the scornful; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law doth he meditate day and night."

Constant meditation on the precepts of God's word is the source of this blessedness, and saves him from the path and the fate of the wicked.

VI. Finally, cherish virtuous sentiments and virtuous habits. This accords with the whole tenor of Solomon's counsel to the young; and if you follow this counsel, your father, like the Father of the righteous, shall greatly rejoice. The adoption and the cherishing of virtuous sentiments is essential to the practice of virtue. A corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit. That your sentiments may be virtuous, you must give yourselves to the study of virtue. Remember the words of St. Paul in his epistle to the Philippians, and in this matter make them the rule of your conduct:

"Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."

Yes, my young friends, think on these things; continued meditation upon them will fill your minds with useful maxims for the regulation of your conduct, and will thus most powerfully influence that conduct. It will tend to make you true and honest, just and pure and lovely, a diligent student and a useful man. It will save you from the snares of the wicked, and from the destruction that awaits the devotees of pleasure, the victims of appetite and of lust, against which, in the strongest terms, Solomon

warns his son ; and the careful study of his counsel on this head, I most earnestly commend to you.

To these counsels I might add much, but our time does not permit ; and if you are disposed to pursue a course of conduct that will gladden the hearts of your parents, sufficient has been said, I hope, to confirm that disposition. And if you are not thus disposed, I should have but a faint hope of ever enlisting your feelings in this subject, however much I might enlarge upon it.

Can a father or mother fail to rejoice, at seeing a beloved son manifesting the greatest deference for their authority and counsels ; seeing him earnestly engaged in seeking after truth, wisdom, instruction and understanding, and that in the highest and most important meanings of these terms ; seeing him, too, the companion of the wise and good, avoiding all evil courses and wicked men, and embracing sound and virtuous sentiments, and ever acting in accordance with them ?

It does not require then to have minds equally cultivated with your own to be partakers of the joy, of which so often I have had occasion to speak. I well remember an occurrence at one of our annual commencements, about thirty years ago, which confirms the remark just made. The son of a plain and unlettered man, one of the youngest members of his class, and at the same time one of the first scholars of that class, who, not many years after leaving College, descended to an honoured grave, was pronouncing the oration assigned to him as his part in the exercises of that day, and such was the

impression that his speech and his speaking made upon the minds of some of his auditors, that they were instinctively prompted to inquire, "Who is that youth?" "He is my son," said the delighted father, who happened to be near; and this he said much to the surprise and delight of those that stood by, and listened to this unexpected burst of a father's joy.

What a glorious sight would it be to see a whole college of such youths!

SORROW IS BETTER THAN LAUGHTER.

BY

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“Sorrow is better than laughter: for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better. The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning; but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth. It is better to hear the rebuke of the wise, than for a man to hear the song of fools. For as the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of the fool. This also is vanity. Ecc. vii. 3-6.

THE ripe experience of Solomon, whom we still believe to be the Preacher in this book, was obtained among circumstances as favorable for a complete judgment, as any man ever had, and resulted in a melancholy determination. At each stage of progress he seems to pause, and looking back to say—“this also is vanity.” It is a conclusion to which many have come, and there are moments in life when we are all disposed to sit down in despondency, as if the world had proved a cheat, and as if no words could better express the sum of our observations than those of the wisest of kings—“Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.” In such a result there is not necessarily any religion. A Gen-

tile, an infidel, or a savage, is competent to feel such grief, and to utter such disappointment. Emptiness of earthly pleasure may be used by sovereign grace as a preparation for the fulness of heavenly good ; but in a majority of cases, the conviction tends either to epicurean indulgence, “let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die ;” or to blank, atheistic despair, in which the misguided wretch commits self-murder by strong drink, the pistol, or the cord. Hence it becomes a question, second to none in the philosophy of life, how to regulate pleasure and pain, joy and grief, so as to avoid the extremes of carnal folly on one hand, and of horrible despondence on the other. Under this general head it is important to see whether real good may not be extracted even from disappointment, loss, and pain ; and whether there is not some middle ground of safety and profit between the lawless exhilaration of the gay world, and the sullen self-torment of misanthropy. And we find nothing but revelation which furnishes any true help in this problem, or teaches us how to use our sorrows as a means of ultimate joy. It was worthy of Solomon to leave on record the solution of this enigma ; indeed the spirit of wisdom which he had sought in youth, returned to him in age, when he had run his unparalleled round of pleasure, and, if tradition errs not, made these maxims the solace of his graver declining years, and through him a treasury of wisdom for succeeding ages. Difficult as some parts of the book of Ecclesiastes are, there is nothing clearer than its grand termination (xii. 13) :—“Let us hear

the conclusion of the whole matter; Fear God and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man"—the *summum bonum*—the end of creation and existence.

There is, perhaps, no man of middle life, not brutalized by sensual delights, or insane with cupidity, who does not sometimes feel himself in the darkness expressed in the latter verses of the preceding chapter, which open the way for our text. Everything that he has touched has turned into disgusting nothingness. Many things have been tried, and he has almost swept the entire curve of human pursuits and promises, as to their kinds; but by none of them has he found his inward condition bettered. In his circuit through the vast edifice of this world, from flight to flight and gallery to gallery, he has locked up a thousand doors, and sealed them with the inscription—*There is nothing here worth entering for*. He has seen friends fall dead on the very threshold of their hopes, and has exclaimed with the great British politician, when a rival was stricken down at the very hustings, "What shadows we are, and what shadows we pursue!" Or, if a scholar, he has muttered to himself Pindar's saying, "Man is a shadow!"* He has outlived such mutations, as to rob him of all security about the family or the property he may leave, being in doubt what change in government or laws the next turn of the popular wheel may bring up when he shall be in his vault; but no words can better convey the meaning of his heart, in such dismal twilight hours, than those of

* Σκιά ἄνθρωπος.

the preacher (vi. 11.):—"Seeing there be many things that increase vanity, what is man the better? For who knoweth what is good for man in this life; all the number of the days of the life of his vanity, which he spendeth as a shadow? For who can tell a man what shall be after him under the sun."*

The Stoics, those famous philosophers of old time, the Pharisees of Greece and Rome, undertook to turn nature out of doors, and as trouble was manifestly unavoidable, to persuade themselves and others that pain was no evil. Could they have held men at this point, it had been something gained, but the lesson of the Porch was ignominiously recanted in the first moment of keen anguish. The wiser teaching of the Hebrews had no such absurdity. It admitted that pain was pain, and that evil was evil. But it did not rush to the opposite extreme, like Epicurus, and assert that pleasure is the chief good, and that we must make the most of carnal joys, employing virtue only to enhance and secure the exquisite satisfactions of this life. From first to last God's inspired system takes man as he is, appeals to the common uncontradicted experience of all souls, in all ages, admits the ills of life, shows their origin, and, above all, indicates the way to make them useful, and the certain means of escaping them for ever.

Our inspired monitor closes the eye on neither side. He looks at pleasure, he looks at pain, and with a wise discernment of each. Both doors are open to him: he hears the noise of revelry, and

* Margin.

the lamentations of woe; and the invaluable record which he makes is, that *Man derives more good from sorrow, wisely considered, than from the excesses of pleasure*—a proposition which we shall find it profitable to examine. It is variously expressed. Sorrow is set over against laughter; the house of mourning over against the house of mirth; the rebuke of the wise over against the music of fools; the day of death over against the day of birth: all tending, however, to this, that trouble, pain, and grief, have their bright side, and that giddy indulgence and merriment carry a sting. In this comparison of pain and pleasure, the result is so opposed to the opinion and feelings of all the world, as to need some show of good reasons, which we are now about to attempt. With God's blessing it may be a relief to some wounded spirit.

1. *Sorrow is better than laughter, because a great part of worldly merriment is no better than folly.* Here we take no extreme or ascetic ground. It would be morose, and sour, and unchristian, to scowl at the gambols of infancy, or to hush the laugh of youth, on fit occasions. Even here, however, the wise guardian will sometimes lay his gentle but repressive hand on the buoyant spirit, and teach juvenile exuberance that it may go the length of self-injury, and end in trouble. Cheerfulness is no where forbidden, even in adult life; and we perhaps offend God oftener by our frowns than by our smiles. He who believes that his soul is in a safe state, and who receives his daily mercies with thankfulness may well rejoice. The very care of

health demands the relaxation and stimulus of reasonable mirth. Solomon himself has called it a medicine. But you all do know that there is a merriment which admits no rule, confines itself by no limit, shocks every maxim even of sober reason, absorbs the whole powers, wastes the time, and debilitates the intellect, even if it do not lead to supreme love of pleasure, profligacy, and general intemperance and voluptuousness. A wise heathen, or a sedate North American Indian, would form the same judgment of our city amusements, in which thousands are expended, and in which the resonance of midnight music, the questionable heats of flushed performers, and the unhealthy lassitude ensuing on extreme mirth and laborious display, remind reading men of a hundred biting observations of ancient Gentile satirists on the assemblies of their day. But the world will do anything; will wear any dress or undress; will make any outlay; will teach its children any posture-making or grimace; will run any risk of destroying souls, which may be prescribed by those who lead the mode. And this they call pleasure; and this is aped by church-professors, who would rather die than be left behind in the race of expensive and luxurious fashion. The prattle, the "foolish jesting, which is not convenient," the song and outcry, inflamed by wine and rivalry, and the "chambering and wantonness" which, lower down in the scale, come of these, and show their tendency, are (I say not in the eye of the Christian or of Christ,

but in the eye of common reason) too trifling for an immortal mind.

2. *Sorrow is better than laughter, because much of worldly merriment tends to no intellectual or moral good.* And must I prove to you that intellectual and moral good are the great end? Must I tell you that you are not all body, all brute?—that you have something within which is not animal or sensual?—that you are made to know an Incarnate God, and to be like him? I will not so insult my audience; I will not so degrade my office as to press the proof. Wordly pleasures, and the expressions of these, do nothing for the immaterial part. When you have put the best face on them, they leave you where they found you. But ah! this is far too favorable a construction. The oft-repeated gaieties, and sports, and dissipations, which are included under the terms of the wise man, and which are for substance the same in Jerusalem and Princeton, leave no one the same. The utmost that can be pretended is that they amuse and recreate. We admit, we applaud recreation and amusement, but within the bounds of reason, within the limits of religion, by means which are above doubt, and in ways which offend not the church or the world. In their very notion, they are exceptions, and should be sparing.

But there are a thousand recreative processes connected with healthful exercise, with knowledge, with the study of beautiful nature, with the practice and contemplation of art, and with the fellowship of friends, which unbend the tense nerve and re-

fresh the wasted spirits, while at the same time they instruct the mind and soften or tranquillize the heart. Not so with the unbridled joys which find vent in redoubled peals of mirth and obstreperous carousal, or in the lighter play of chattered nonsense and never-ending giggle. Make such intercourse the business of life (and with some, if you include preparations and councils for the party, and subsequent words and doings, it is the business of whole seasons), and you degrade the understanding of these persons to such a degree, that you err if you expect ever to find them equal to a discussion of anything more tasking, to what they call their mind, than the last spicy news, or the last provocative novel, or the last libertine dance. But, even among the intellects thus mollified by mirth and pleasure, there is scarcely one so far gone as to plead that these gaieties benefit the spiritual part; that they make conscience more calm, death more easy, or eternal life more sure. The "house of feasting," the "house of mirth," whether open by day or night, offers no advantage to the soul, and the SOUL IS THE MAN.

3. *Sorrow is better than laughter, because worldly mirth is short.* In the Eastern countries, where fuel is very scarce, every combustible shrub, brush, and bramble is seized upon for culinary fires. Of these the blaze is bright, hot, and soon extinct. Such is worldly mirth. "For as the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of the fool." It is noisy—more noisy than if there were anything in it. But it soon ceases. Physical limits are put

to gay pleasures. Mirth was meant to be not the food but the condiment. The loudest laughter cannot laugh forever. Lungs and diaphragm forbid and rebel. St. Vitus himself, in popish story, saw an end to his penal dance. There is a time of life when such pleasures become as difficult as they are ungraceful; and there is not in society a more ridiculous object, even in its own circle, than a tottering, antiquated, bedizened devotee of fashion. Grief comes in and shortens the amusement. Losses and reverses shorten it. And, if there were nothing else, pleasure must be short, because it cannot be extended to Judgment and Eternity. I apprehend there is as little loud laughter in heaven as in hell. In our wiser hours we think of permanent joy under far different and more tranquil types and emblems.

4. *Worldly mirth is unsatisfying.* This is what is chiefly meant by the word VANITY. "This also is Vanity." Solomon tried these things, and inscribed on them, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity," *i. e.*, emptiness and disappointment. It is a very common experience of thousands—always drinking, always athirst—who never breathe it to their neighbors, and who yet bring up their children to let down buckets into the same empty wells. The world's pleasures are not what they imagined. Even money, which they thought omnipotent, (thus making it *God*, and thus proving covetousness to be what sacred Scripture calls it, *idolatry*); divine *money* will not buy solid peace. The man wonders why the toys and rattles which pleased

him once, please him now no more. They are vanity, and all is vanity; and every day that he lives longer will make it more formidably vanity. Now, pray observe, the case is directly the reverse with regard to sound intellectual and spiritual enjoyments; for which the capacity is perpetually increasing with its indulgence. But he who has laughed loudest and longest, comes at length, though from habit still wearing the guise and uttering the ejaculations of joy, to know, with a grinding consciousness, that "even in laughter the heart is sorrowful, and the end of that mirth is heaviness."—Prov. xiv. 13.

"The heart of fools" (ver. 4) "is, nevertheless, in the house of mirth;" but thus far accompanying Solomon on this path which he knew so well, we have found nothing which should place it among the resorts of true wisdom. It is not the house to live in, or to die in. One might stop there on a journey, but will not seek it as an abode. Perhaps, after all, you have undervalued and mistaken that other house, of which the wise man speaks. There is no brilliant illumination on its front; no sounds of reveling come from its windows; its avenues are shaded by the willow, the cypress, and the yew. From the broad road few go aside to seek this sequestered mansion; indeed all who resort hither seem first to enter against their will. Yet many who emerge from this covert bear marks of being sadder and wiser men. Under this roof they have been brought to a pause; have learnt a lesson; have risen to an elevation; have found a friend;

and have acquired an inheritance. So that they are less fearful when summoned to enter again; less ready to chase the butterfly on their former highroad; and more prepared to give as their experience: "The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning." We say then,

5. *Sorrow is better than laughter, because sorrow breeds reflection.* The man who sorrows, must muse. Even the customs of society further this. Inconsiderate, headlong people are sometimes so changed in a single day by affliction, as to be a wonder to others and to themselves. Now this is a great point, because much of irreligion arises from want of thought. That frivolous, laughing creature scarcely knew that she had a soul, until hurried into this bower of tears, and set down beside some urn of sorrowful memories, and made to hear, in every murmuring leaf and breeze, the admonition, "Consider your ways." Worldly pleasure is so much the reverse, that its very province is to kill thought. There can be no contemplation amidst the riot of self-indulgence; but the house of mourning is a meditative abode. Its doors are many. Its inmates are of every tribe, age, and character. Each mourns apart: "the heart knoweth its own bitterness." But each has been brought to consideration. The sorrowing man has at least found out this—that he is vulnerable. There is no piety in this; but commonly there can be no piety without it. He who falls wounded, is prompt to examine the arrow; and sometimes sees it labelled with his *sin*. Before they were afflicted, a large proportion of

God's people went astray ; and, if they live long enough, they can all declare, that the solemn pauses of their bereavement, illness, poverty, shame, and fear, have been better to them than the dainties of the house of feasting. •

6. *Sorrow is better than laughter, because sorrow brings lessons of wisdom.* Sufferers not only think but learn. Many sermons could not record all the lessons of affliction. It is indeed a melting of the whole surface, fitting it for the impression of every religious truth. Considered as the fruit of chastisement, and as coming from an offended but loving Master and Judge, its chief teaching is undoubtedly that of reproof. It tells us wherein we have offended. It takes us away from the flattering crowd, and from seducing charmers, and keenly reaches, with its probe, the hidden iniquity. This is less pleasing than worldly joy, but it is more profitable. Our best advisers are those who are never found among the frolicsome and luxurious, but who take us by the hand in the darkened chamber. Ver. 5, "It is better to bear the rebuke of the wise, than for a man to hear the song of fools." The Bible is the chief book in the house of mourning—read by some there who have never read it elsewhere, and revealing to its most assiduous students new truths, shining forth in affliction like stars which have been hidden in daylight. But, above all, the house of mourning is the chosen resort of the great Teacher, who visited Martha and Mary, and who never discloses his face amidst the glare of convivial torches, or wastes his pensive tones among the

clamours of fashionable pleasure. Many ages before God was incarnate, Messiah speaks of himself in prophecy, as the instructor of the sorrowing: Isa. l. 4, "The Lord hath given me the tongue of the learned (the power of instruction), that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary." It is a sufficient indemnity for all losses, if in the house of mourning we meet with *Him*, who does not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax. In days of pleasure we seldom think of *death*. Who would venture on the word in any crowd of persons engaged for hours in the solemn business of amusing themselves? But it is the subject of a great lesson, which is apt to be brought vividly before us in the hour of bereavement or in the sick-chamber; and numbering of our days is indispensable in order that we apply our hearts unto wisdom. Hence our context: "It is better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting; for that (to wit, *death*, v. 1) is the end of all men, and the living will lay it to his heart." These are but samples of the wisdom to which we are introduced by sorrow.

7. *Sorrow is better than laughter, because sorrow amends the heart and life.* Not by any efficiency of good; of such efficiency, pain, whether of body or mind, knows nothing; but by becoming the vehicle of divine influences. I have not yet read or heard of a single soul renewed by the garrulous assembly, or in the jovial hall. But how multitudinous would be the procession, if we could see at once all who have issued new creatures from the

house of mourning! Even *there*—some there are—so blasted by depraved passion, and so rocky in selfishness, as to brave every softening influence of truth, though poured over them by the very hand of a chastising God. But yet the ways of providence are such, that troubled spirits, bathed in tears, are repeatedly made to cry with a joy which swallows up all foregoing griefs, “Before we were afflicted we went astray, but *now* have we kept thy law!”

Laughter is not—cannot be—but sorrow daily is a means of grace—a channel for heavenly love and divine truth to convey itself into hearts emptied of earthly good, till the full soul, amazed at its own happiness, despises its former delusions, and glories even in tribulation; yielding to wave after wave of the gracious current, and naming these, Patience, Experience, Hope, and Love of God, shed abroad by the Holy Ghost. Shrink not then from the chastening of the Lord, my brother, my sister, despise not, faint not. Mistake not the gentle hand which drops no disquietude or pang, even of a moment, but by the consent and at the bidding of One that standeth by, sustaining the throbbing, swooning patient in his own arms, and yielding himself to the touch of our infirmities, the rather, as He was once tried in all points, like as we are. “By the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better.”

It is the common testimony of Christians, that they seldom learn very fast in Christ’s school, except when they are under the rod. On a sudden,

the believer comes to consider how much he has been prospered, and how different his case is from what he remembers. "Then," says he, "I was perpetually turning to the most sorrowful passages of Job, David, and Jeremiah. Now I am in peace. My table is laden—my cup overflows. Cold and nakedness are only figures of poetry. If not in wealth, I am exempt from embarrassment. My senses and my health are preserved. It is long since I was in mourning for a near friend." Thus Job said: "I shall die in my nest, and I shall multiply my days as the sand. My root was spread out by the waters, and the dew lay all night upon my branch." The prosperous believer owns all this, and looks around him, at first with surprise and complacency, but then with disquietude. For he sees likewise that in some degree he has forgotten God his Saviour. The Bible has become less precious. Prayer is less frequent, importunate, and indispensable. Daily taking up the cross is unknown. Sympathy with the wretched is less deep. Self-importance is on the increase. Love of the world, in some of its shapes, is gaining strength. God is more absent from his thoughts—Christ is scarcely longed for, as in hours of humility and tenderness; the Holy Spirit is less cried out for, and panted after, as a *Comforter*. In short, prosperity has brought leanness into the soul.

Happy are they who take heed in time, and profit under the whisper of admonition, or the gentle threatening. If not, Christ loves his own too well to leave them without stripes. And what a wou-

derful virtue there is in the rod, when it is in Christ's hands! The very beginnings of chastisement sometimes drive the wandering child back to the bosom of infinite affection. Continued dangers, long languishings and disappointments, relapses into grief, sudden alarms, keen anguish, redoubled visitations, in stroke upon stroke, all go home to his soul, by the mighty power of sanctifying grace. In his affliction he seeks God; in his affliction he cannot live a moment without Christ. There is such an ordered connexion between sin and sorrow, that from his sorrows he goes back to his sins; and hours of pain and fear become hours of repenting. If he repined before, he can repine no longer. "Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins? Let us search and try our way, and turn again to the Lord!" He prays; if his trial is great, he prays without ceasing. Though he never felt smaller in his own eyes, God is nevertheless, by these very means, exalting him and instructing him, and deepening the work of grace in his heart. That prime part of his spiritual education is making rapid advances, namely, the subduing of his will to the will of God. He is becoming more indifferent to wordly good or evil; more willing that God should rule and dispose; more fixed on the great spiritual and eternal ends of life; more ready to prefer holiness (though by painful means) to joy and ease; and more resolved to make his all consist in knowing, serving, and enjoying the Lord his Redeemer. If, my brethren, a visit to the House of Sorrow makes the face of

Jesus more familiar or more beloved, then shrink not from putting your hand in His, and following Him even into deeper shadows than any you have yet known; for, above all beings, it is He who knows the most of affliction.

8. *Sorrow is better than laughter, because sorrow likens us to Him whom we love.* You know His name. He is the *Man of Sorrows*—the companion or brother of grief.—(Is. liii.) His great work, even our salvation, was not more by power or holiness than by sorrows. He took our flesh, that He might bear our sorrows. And I have sometimes been humbled to think, that we resemble Christ in nothing so nearly as in suffering. Not in holiness; alas, how distant the imitation! Not in wisdom, or devotion, or self-sacrificing love. But sometimes we are allowed to fill up (Coloss. i. 24) “that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in our flesh”—to drain some dregs of his ocean-cup—to have a faint, suggestive semblance of his pains—in a lesser sense, to be made conformable unto His death. We abjure all Popish notions of penance, self-punishment, sharing mediatorial agonies, adding to infinite merits. We abhor them as constructive blasphemy; but we cling to the belief, that in the progress of the mystical union, wherein “the head of every man is Christ,” there is even here a conformity between the Head and the members, and that this conformity is partly effected in the House of Mourning. And then mark the consequences: “As the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ.” “For even

hereunto were ye called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow his steps." "Rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory shall be revealed, ye also may be glad with excess of joy." If we suffer with Him, we shall also reign with Him. If continued, or repeated, or unusual trials be your lot, till it become the very habit of your mind to look for every cloud to bring a storm, think it not strange; be not tossed away from your anchorage; let faith and hope hold fast; give God the glory which belongs to His paternal wisdom, and Jesus the reliance which befits His dying compassion; and know of a surety, that every redoubling wave of grief is definitely adjusted in time and measure, to carry you to that certain elevation of joy which could not be reached without it. Deeply feel that there is a guidance of unerring wisdom in these particular pains, which makes them the exact remedies for your evils, and the powerful instruments, through grace, of bringing you nearer to the Lord; and while you tremble, learn to say, "The cup which my Father giveth me, shall I not drink it?"

9. *Sorrow is better than laughter* (last of all), *because sorrow ends in joy*. There is a sorrow of the world which worketh death; there are earthly pangs which are but the beginning of sorrows; there are losses which go on increasing for ever, and chastisements which prepare for judgment. Nevertheless, there are those things in grief which open towards heaven, and those things in the

House of Mourning which the wise man will lay to his heart! Where God gives faith, He gives affliction, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth; and these tribulations are parts of the chain which binds the soul to its coming glory. The fiery trial through a furnace is for the purging away of the dross, that there may come forth from the crucible a golden vessel for the Master's use. Nothing can add to our holiness without adding to our eventual joy. *How* this operates we do not always see; perhaps seldom. But the process is not the less certain. The very resistance of a virtuous mind to adversity—the bracing of the frame—the breasting of the torrent—the patience, the resignation, the hope amidst the billows, the love that kisses the chastening hand, the persistent obedience that works on against wind and tide—as well in storm as in tranquillity—the high resolve and courage that mount more boldly out of the surge of grief, the silent endurance of the timid and the frail, when out of weakness they are made strong—these, and such as these, increase the capacity for future holiness and heavenly bliss. Of those ransomed souls, who open the bosom to the largest delights of Paradise, it shall be said, “These are they that have come out of great tribulation.” Such are not the fruits of laughter and mirth; nor such the rewards of the unregenerate and the thoughtless. They knew not that their heaven was all in this life, till the short-lived bubble had exploded. Happy had it been for them, if their occasional sorrows had led them to reflection; but they were unwise: “The

heart of fools is in the house of mirth." It is a serious reason why we should set a watch against immoderate joy, and the pleasures and pomps of this life; and why even youth should repress its maddening thirst for perpetual gaiety and voluptuous self-pleasing.

We need not court sorrow, nor rush upon it unbidden; it will come uninvited. But when it comes, we should turn the seeming enemy into a friend; we should prepare for it—it is inevitable; we should profit by it—it is edifying. Sad, beyond the common lot, is the case of that man who receives his troubles in hardness of heart, with indifference, with sullenness, or with contempt; who, "being often reproved, hardeneth his neck;" who sins amidst the murmurs of Divine rebuke, and bares his heart to the bolt of God's anger. No one can come out of a great affliction without being signally better, or greatly worse. It were as well to laugh with the idle, as to sit in the seat of the scornful, in the midst of deserved warnings. If anything in life shall swell the dire account of the sinner, it will be his neglected trials and sufferings, every one of which should have been to him a voice from heaven. Trouble after trouble may come on a man, and leave him less and less impressible, but not less guilty. For a while God may even leave him to himself, cease to chastise, and suffer his latter days to be serene in apathy and self-pleasing; but wisdom hears a voice from the throne, saying, "Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt yet more and more! Ephraim

is joined to his idols: LET HIM ALONE!" He may be rich, he may be envied, he may say, Soul, take thine ease, to-morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant. He may gain the whole world, but he has lost his own soul!

Give me, O God, the sorrows of Thy children, with Thy love, Thy Son, and Thy Heaven, rather than the false peace and the hollow prosperity of them whom thou forsakest!

But here is a drop of sweetness, from Christ's own hand, let fall into the cup of anguish. Take it, and rejoice! Has that cup been bitter? *Afterward* it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness. Resign yourself to whatever God may appoint, "knowing that through much tribulation you must enter into the kingdom of God." For the first breath of heaven will obliterate every painful remembrance of the longest lifetime of distress.

LOOKING AT THE THINGS WHICH ARE NOT SEEN.

BY

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“While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.”—II. CORINTHIANS, IV. 18.

IN this passage, the Apostle explains to us the method by which he succeeded, in so dealing with the trials and afflictions of life, as to make them the means of his spiritual advancement: so that though *the outward man was perishing, the inward man was renewed day by day. He was troubled on every side, but not distressed—perplexed, but not in despair—persecuted, but not forsaken—cast down, but not destroyed. He bore about in his body the dying of the Lord Jesus; but it was that the life of Jesus might be made manifest in him.* The grievous sufferings of body which he endured; the falsehood and treachery of friends in whom he had confided; the persecuting malignity of those, whom he, in the self-denying spirit of love, was seeking to benefit; the unkind and harsh repulses of his offered ministrations of charity; the derisions and sneers with which the truths that he

delivered were received:—These, and many other like trials that he encountered, inflicted upon him severe pain, amounting at times, doubtless, to anguish; so much so, that the desolation they wrought is fitly described as the work of death. But it was the death only of the outward man; and, instead of harming that which constituted the inner and central portion of his being—his moral and spiritual nature—it only contributed to his life and joy.

How was it that this Apostle was enabled, thus, to take joyfully these trials which have prostrated others? How was it that the perishing of his outward man was made to renew his inward man day by day? Where, and how, did he get that strong assurance, that these *light afflictions* were working for him *a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory*?

How did he acquire this strange mastery over the evils of his lot—this singular power to hold the world in subjection—to triumph over temptation—to rejoice in the midst of sorrow—to welcome affliction as the minister to his spiritual good, and to endure, through all that could be laid upon him, as seeing Him who is invisible?

It was simply by *looking at the things which are not seen*, instead of looking at the things which are seen; it was by his distinct perception and strong belief of *the Truth*, joined to the habitual contemplation of it, that he was enabled to rise superior to all that is temporary, transient, and accidental. *The things that are not seen* were not to him, as they are to too many of us, the barren formulas of a creed

which he had been taught to receive—they were not the shadowy abstractions, dim and indistinct, of philosophical speculation, nor the poetic fictions, beautiful if true, of religious sentiment. They were realities, as distinctly perceived, and as certainly believed as if seen with the bodily eye. He did not doubt of their existence. His faith was to him as the evidence of eyesight, bringing to light that which was hidden, giving substance to that which was abstract, and drawing into nearness that which was far off. A future state of existence, in which the righteous shall be crowned with unspeakable and everlasting glory—instead of being, in his mind, one hypothesis among many, superior to the rest only by some slender preponderance of probability in its favor, and therefore received at one time and rejected at another, according to the influence of the changing modes of the mind upon the interpretation of evidence—was a truth which he had settled upon grounds which were never more to be disturbed, and which, by frequent reflection, had become so worked up into his intellectual and moral being that it formed a part of himself, and assisted in constituting the medium through which he looked out upon all the events of his condition and destiny. When he looked upon the death scene of some dear friend, or when he forecast his own dying hour, he was harassed by no misgivings lest death might be, after all, some kind of a leap in the dark—a plunge into some unknown and horrid abyss. “*For we know*,” said he, it is no surmise, resting on uncertain probabilities—it is no hope, cherished and

scarce kept alive amid conflicting fears—but “*we know*, that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” Everywhere in the writings and in the life of that Apostle, we observe this same thoroughness and depth of conviction. There is a sincerity and an earnestness about him which could only have resulted in the most intimate persuasion, that he was uttering that which he knew to be true—that he was delivering that the value of which he had himself tried. It is evident that, in his mind, the general truths of religion were habitually present to rule the occasions for which they were needed. This material and sensible world, instead of girding him around, like an opaque wall, to intercept every ray of light from beyond itself, was to him translucent, in every part, with the brightness of the spiritual universe that surrounds and penetrates it. Things visible were, to his eye, but the accidents and vanishing forms, of which things invisible were the true and abiding realities.

Any man who can attain to a like simplicity and strength of faith in an unseen world, will acquire a like supremacy over the objects and scenes of this present life.

But herein lies the difficulty. The greater part of mankind live by sense, and draw their motives of action, not from the remote conclusions of reason, but from their present feeling, from the impressions made upon them by the things which they deal and converse with every day. In this lies all

the force and strength of worldly temptations—for, were the things of this world and of another equally distinct and near, there could be no competition between them. But the things of this world sport and play before the senses. No man can avoid seeing them, and feeling, to some extent, their influence; and many men feel and see nothing else. They are obtrusive, thrusting themselves upon our notice, and offering to us a seeming good which our hearts crave. But the spiritual world is hidden from our vision. It cannot be perceived by sense. It requires thought and reflection to find it, and, when found, it can be kept before the mind only by a continual resistance to the temporary impressions to which we are subject. The things of this world have, in this respect, an important advantage, and our moral position is rendered thereby one of extreme difficulty and hazard.

The spiritual system to which we belong is but partially disclosed to the most patient and earnest seeker. They who know the most of it, know only in part. And in that small part which is open to our survey and comprehension, we find much to perplex and embarrass us. The general idea to which we come, of moral order and the feeling that we ourselves are subject to its requisitions, are so often confounded and set at nought by the anomalies and disorders which we see prevailing around us; there is so much that seems to be fitted to sustain and sanction a life that is shaped only in accordance with the demands of passion and the views of worldly prudence; that we are in continual dan-

ger of losing sight of the paramount nature and claims of general principles, amidst doubtful instances and apparent exceptions. Truth, virtue, justice, and all the general ideas and laws which belong to our moral nature, come thus to be looked upon as fragments of an hypothesis that but partially explains our condition, rather than as expressions of the true reality; and they fail, therefore, to obtain such a practical hold upon our feelings as is needful for our sure and steady guidance. We find it difficult to retain at all times and through all temptations, such a conviction of their reality and importance as to make us conform our conduct to them.

The man who is tempted to increase his wealth by some fraudulent act, which he imagines he may safely commit, yields to the temptation because of his want of faith in honesty as a real principle of action. He is sure of the wealth that he will gain, he is sure of the good which this wealth will procure him, but he is not sure that the notion of honesty is anything more than a mere notion, or a convenient hypothesis that may be dispensed with on pressing occasions; or, at best, it is involved in so much of doubt and uncertainty, that it yields to the more palpable existence and claims of the things that are seen. If he truly believed in the law of honesty, he would feel that he could never violate this law without incurring loss and damage that would infinitely outweigh the temporary and partial benefit of transgression. But, to the eye of sense, the benefit is near and certain—the loss is distant and doubtful; and, through the want or the

weakness of faith, that which is seen prevails over that which is not seen.

So, too, in every instance in which men act under the influence of views and motives that leave out of account a future state of being, they disclose the feebleness of their faith in another world. If it be true that the soul of man is immortal, and that it is now undergoing a process of discipline to fit it for its eternal state, then nothing can be clearer than that the whole importance of this life is derived from its relation to the life that is to come. All things here are but means to the attainment of the true ends of our being; and all schemes and plans, all desires and affections, that terminate in the present life, without due reference and subordination to our immortality, are founded upon an untrue estimate of our condition. They involve, of necessity, a wrong judgment of the understanding, and impeach the soundness of the intellect no less than the purity of the heart.

Doubtless, it was possible that God could have so made and placed us, that we should have been delivered from the blindness and uncertainty which now beset our conclusions on moral subjects. We can conceive that, without any enlargement or modification of our present faculties, we might have been permitted to hold intercourse with other moral beings who have had a larger experience than ours, and enjoyed a closer intimacy with the principles and purposes of the Divine governments. The millions of spiritual creatures that walk the earth unseen, might have been commissioned to

manifest themselves unto us, and strengthen *our* faith by the communication of theirs. The government of God might have been laid bare so widely and fully to our inspection, and the consequences of every action, whether for good or evil, so clearly shown, that it would have been impossible for any mind to throw off the conviction of the invariable obligations of virtue and the folly of vice; such light might have been poured around us, such revelations made of things not now seen, as would at once supersede many of our greatest difficulties and put an end to our fickle vibrations from one side to the other. We see no reason why such disclosures of truth might not be made even here as would be sufficient to confirm the faltering virtue of all who love the truth, and throw off those that hate it into irreconcilable and deadly opposition.

But whether possible or not, such is not our actual lot, nor would such an unrestrained and overwhelming revelation consist with the obvious purpose of God in relation to us. It is evident that our present state was intended to be one of trial and discipline; and it appears to be, so far as we can judge, essential to such a state that there should be so much reserve as to leave room for the conflict of antagonist principles. The infidel has asked with a sneer, "Has God spoken? Then why has not man believed?" As if the possibility of disbelief were a proof that the voice could not have come from God. But what if it were not the purpose of God so to speak as to compel the attention of those who are unwilling to hear? Had He broken

in upon the stillness of this nether world in a voice of thunder, compelling every man to hear and regard, it would have frustrated the design with which He has placed us here. Instead of this, He has spoken in a voice so distinct, that all who listen earnestly for it, may hear and understand; but so still, that men may, if they choose, close their ears to its teachings. We are left to choose whether we will believe or disbelieve. The popular notion that belief is independent of the will, and, therefore, not a proper ground for praise or blame, is so far from being true, that, on the contrary, that which it is most important for us to believe is that which we need not believe, unless we are willing to do so. Whosoever will, may acquaint himself with the truth; but neither reason nor revelation forces it upon the notice or acceptance of any one who is reluctant to find, or unwilling to receive it. Things eternal are so far revealed as to manifest themselves to the eye that freely seeks and fixes upon them, while they are unseen by all who choose to turn away and pass on in heedless disregard. Vice is often so disguised in the shape of virtue, and error counterfeits so nearly the semblance of truth, that the one may be easily mistaken for the other.

Such is our actual position: and it is worse than useless to repine or murmur under its privations and hardships. We are shut up here as prisoners in a small part of God's dominions; and, though light from beyond steals in through here and there a window of our prison-house, it does not come with

such noon-day blaze as to obscure at all times the taper-lights of our own kindling; it does not enter in all directions—it does not disclose to us fully all that we desire to know. But if we will receive freely and gladly its mild beams, and train our eyes long and steadily to its use, we can learn to see clearly all that it is necessary for us to know; and if, on the other hand, we turn away in proud dissatisfaction from the openings through which this light enters, and waste our strength in important attempts to break at other points through the dark walls by which we are bound in, or if we only casually and carelessly attend to it, as it seems to flash now and then before us, we shall soon become altogether incapable of perceiving it. False lights will shed their glare around us, and so illuminate the gaudy pomps and trickeries by which we are surrounded—so magnify the false attractions and urgent interests of the passing moment, that our prison will become to us as our home. The things that are seen, though they are but temporal, will become to us more important than the eternal things which are unseen. The facility with which we can so dispose of the convictions of reason and conscience as to permit ourselves, without the most pungent remorse, to live on the indulgence of an undue regard for the things of this world,—the ease with which we can turn the light that is within us, into darkness, and call good, evil, and evil, good,—is one of the most alarming features of our depravity. It would seem impossible that any thoughtful mind could reflect upon this peculiarity of its nature,

without being startled into instant prayer to God, accompanied with the most patient and earnest seeking after truth. It is only thus that we can hope to attain right views of our condition, and of those truths that are to rule our destiny.

It needs no argument to prove that the great majority of men act habitually under the influence of erroneous judgments. They attribute a fixedness and value to the things of this life that do not really belong to them. They hold the great moral truths, by which the soul of man ought to live, so loosely that they give way continually to the clamorous demands of passion and interest. Looking only, or chiefly at the things that are seen, their standards of judgment are commensurate only with the wants of a temporal life, and are, therefore, essentially defective and false. Their habitual interests are the product, not of truth, but of fancy, and the scenes which surround them are as unreal as the phantasies of a dream. Their lives are a vain show. It is true that there is a material world—the visible objects before us have a real existence; there *is* such a thing as wealth, and worldly honour and human applause; there is love and friendship, the domestic fireside, and the warm household affections that grow up beside it, literature and science, and a thousand other objects of desire and sources of pleasure. We do not call in question the real existence of these things that are seen. But what are they? What is their intrinsic nature? What is their true value? Here the men of this world fall into greivous error and delusion. The world, in its

largest sense, as comprising all the objects which here appeal to our desires and affections, is to us whatever our judgment of it makes it to be. And the judgment which the majority of men form of it is radically false. They world is not, in truth, what they take it for. It stands before them clothed with a light, and endowed with qualities which do not really belong to it. They commit an error like that of the child who leaps up to grasp the rainbow. There is a rainbow, but it is not what he supposes it to be. And so the things that are seen, in the shapes that they assume before the minds of men, as objects of desire, and motives to action, do not really exist. Their conceptions of them are not framed in accordance with their true nature and qualities, and the judgments founded upon these conceptions are all more or less unsound. He who thus spreads abroad the colors of his own fancy, and who looks habitually at things temporal and finite out of their relations to that which is eternal and infinite, can only have a knowledge about as approximate to the reality, as that which belongs to the animalculæ to whom the dew drop is an ocean. We can have no true knowledge of ourselves unless we study ourselves in our relation to God. We can never know what this world truly is, unless we look at it in its connexion with the world that is to come.

The necessity of the diligent study and contemplation of the truths that connect us with another world, is estimated by the Apostle when he says, "we *look* at the things that are not seen." The

original word implies deep and careful consideration. It is the same word that is used by our Saviour when he delivers the solemn injunction, "*look,*" or *take heed* "that the light that is within thee be not darkness." If we bestow only casual and hurried glances upon the things that are not seen, in the intervals of our zealous pursuit after the things that are seen, we assuredly shall never obtain such a knowledge and belief of them as will enable us to use them for practical purposes. We cannot snatch the meaning of these high truths by such random and careless efforts. We must look long and fixedly upon them before we can penetrate their essence, and so saturate our souls with their meaning, as to make them effective in regulating our feelings and our conduct. In proportion to the distinctness and fulness of the knowledge which we acquire of religious truth, will be the strength of our faith, and the degree of influence which it will exert over us. We cannot be said properly to understand any moral truth unless we feel it, nor can we understand or feel unless we believe. The belief, the knowledge, and the practical effect of any moral truth or principle, are co-extensive, and any one of them may be taken as the strict measure of the others. And here we see the indispensable necessity of regeneration through the influence of the Holy Spirit. Without a new heart we are incapable of the actual intuition of truth, because we are destitute of the holy affections through which alone it can be comprehended. No exercise of the mere reasoning intellect can ever give us a correct

apprehension of moral qualities and truths. Our consciousness is here, as in other things, the master light of all our seeing. Unless our own experience has taught us the meaning of holy love, how can we frame any adequate conception of God, who is love? And how can we understand any moral truth unless our own feelings have been such as to illustrate its meaning? It is one of the prerogatives of the truths of revelation, that the principle of knowledge is likewise a spring and principle of action. It necessarily implies a right moral state of heart.

Without a regenerate heart men believe in the truths of the Bible, only as they believe in the beauties of a fine country through which they travel in darkness. They may believe from the description and testimony of others that they are surrounded by the most lovely scenery, but their notions of it are too vague and indistinct to awaken the emotion that attends the actual inspection of beauty, until the rising sun has revealed to them the varied richness of the scene that encircles them. So it is with the truths of Scripture. The natural man comprehendeth them not, for they are spiritually discerned. There is a vail upon the unregenerate heart through which it sees not at all, or only with a dim and uncertain vision like his to whom men seemed like trees walking. But let the day-star arise, let Him who caused the light to shine out of darkness, shine into his heart; and the truths that were but darkly perceived, brighten at once into new light. He professed before to be-

lieve in the existence and attributes of God, but this truth now bursts upon him in a richness and fulness of meaning of which he had had no previous conception; and he feels that to know God is to love him. He professed before to believe that Jesus Christ had died to redeem us from death, but now he sees the grace and glory of the Saviour in such a light as makes him feel the surprise of a new discovery amid the truths of man's redemption.

It is in the new birth that we must seek the commencement of all true knowledge of spiritual things. We enforce then this primary lesson of Christianity, "ye must be born again," as an indispensable prerequisite to any adequate or effective consideration of the things that are not seen. And this new birth is to be sought by prayer and by the diligent use of all the means of grace with which God has favored us, not forgetting as chief and foremost among these, the study of divine revelation. Though the natural man comprehendeth not the things of the Spirit, yet the outward forms of truth, with such glimpses of their interior meaning as he can gain, are not without their value. There is a reality and power in the teachings of the Bible, addressed to the natural conscience with the authority of "thus saith the Lord," which tend to scatter the visions of that vain and deceitful show which exists only in the deluded imagination, yet from which sin draws its chief enticements. Any man who will give himself to fervent prayer and the earnest study of God's holy word, has every reason to believe that

God will break the chains of his bondage, and scatter the darkness which broods over him, and lead him forth to walk in the liberty of the sons of God, and exult in the open daylight of eternity.

But regeneration is only the commencement of our spiritual life. The work is but begun which, in dependence upon Divine Grace, we are to carry on to completion. We have a hard struggle to maintain in our conflict with the things that are seen and temporal; in our liability to be overtaken by erroneous judgments, arising out of a limited and partial view of our condition, and thus to be surprised into a forgetfulness of our deliberate convictions. We can guard against this danger only by looking steadfastly at the things that are not seen. The more we contemplate them, the more will we understand of their nature and value, the firmer will become our belief in them, and the more influence will they exert in the control of our feelings and conduct. Faith cannot go beyond knowledge, and the life cannot be stable beyond the power of faith. If our comprehension of truth is imperfect or erroneous, in like degree will our faith be weak and fluctuating, and our walk uncertain and inconsistent; and our knowledge of truth—taking for granted the continual presence in the mind of a sense of dependence upon God, which will be manifested in prayer for divine aid, and a right state of the affections, without which we can learn nothing—will be in proportion to the degree in which we devote ourselves to the earnest contemplation of the things that are not seen.

How many Christians are there who have never yet pondered these things sufficiently to enable them to see them, except with such dimness and distortion that they walk with timid and halting step—they fight uncertainly, as one beating the air! How many who understand so little of the true nature of the things that are seen, that they look upon wealth, elevated station, and worldly pleasure as good and desirable possessions in themselves, not knowing, or forgetting, that every view of these things which does not take in their relation to eternal realities, is nothing more than a delusive trick of the imagination.

How many whose formal faith is correct, but whose real belief, as proved by the main current of their feelings, and the ordinary tenor of their walk and conversation, attaches a degree of magnitude and interest to worldly things, that is altogether inconsistent with their just appreciation!

We cannot doubt that there are many Christians who separate between the material and the spiritual world, for the purpose of attributing to each a kind of distinct and independent existence, each containing its own treasures and furnishing its own motives to action. On the one side lies this world, governed by invariable laws, and, to their view, complete in itself; and, therefore, fitly entered upon and pursued with principles and dispositions that have their origin and their end within its boundaries. And, on the other hand, they believe in a spiritual world, not encircling and absorbing this, but existing separate and remote from it, and touch-

ing upon the present order of things only at particular points, and by anomalous interpositions. Hence worldly affairs are one thing, and religion quite a different one. Each stands by itself. The spiritual system, instead of interposing itself entirely through the objects and interests of the present state, is seen in connection with them only on special occasions. It is a thing of Sabbaths, of divine worship, of the formal discharge of religious duties, of seasons of deep affliction, or of such other particular exigencies as seem to call for the decencies and consolations which belong to it. It is this meagre knowledge, and, of course, weak faith, which produces that kind of religion which permits men to press forward on the busy paths of this world, with as much bustling and earnest anxiety as if all their treasures were to be found here, and which brings the things of another world to bear upon them only with sufficient distinctness and force to overcloud their hours of reflection, and lay upon them the occasional sorrows of repentance.

Our religion cannot but partake very much of this character, unless we reflect much upon divine truth. It is no doubt true that the spiritual world encompasses us on every side, so that if our souls should now escape from our bodies, like the bird breaking through the shell which had shut it in, we should at once find ourselves breathing the air of immortality, and looking upon the face of God. It is true that every object here can be properly defined or understood only through its relation to our spiritual interests. It is true that the

sound and din of worldly things, the glare and pomp in which they flash before us, are but the unrealities of a distempered imagination. But how can we attain the conviction of these truths in any other way than by frequent reflection upon them? The great interests and permanent realities by which we ought to be actuated, are not visibly and tangibly present to us like the scenes of our passing life, and we have no other means of making them present than by deliberate, oft-repeated reflection upon them.

No man can pursue any great interest in which important consequences are at stake, without a profound and thoughtful intentness of mind upon his end, and upon the means by which he is seeking to attain it. How especially true must this be in regard to the great interests of religion and eternity! How can we hope, amid the entanglements and difficulties that beset us, to make any real progress in the establishment of a character fashioned after the ideas and laws of an unseen world, without a fixed and habitual thoughtfulness—a thoughtfulness that will never permit us to forget, for any length of time, our true position, or to lose the consciousness of our relation to more glorious beings, and higher interests, than are to be found upon the earth. This must be our habit,—something more than an occasional musing and reverie, at set times, when we force ourselves to the task. It must be the uniform condition of the mind. Through the prevalence of such a predominant habit of thoughtful attention to divine

things, we may acquire a paramount interest in the truth, and incorporate it into the frame and constitution of our souls ; so that while we are enlarging our apprehension of God, his providence, and his purposes, we shall at the same time so work our conceptions into the substance of our intellectual constitution, as to make them the very medium of our vision, the pervading and actuating motives of our lives. Religion will thus become to us the one present thought, motive, and impulse—the one great light by the reflection of which all things will be seen and judged. Then will our temptations be conquered in the strength of that faith which is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen. Then will our repinings of heart, under the hardships and losses to which we are here exposed, be exchanged for joy in view of our coming glory. Then, when environed with difficulties and dangers which hem us in on every side, instead of crying out, with the servant of the prophet, “Alas! my Master! what shall we do?” our eyes will be opened to see the horses and chariots of fire that are about us, and we shall feel secure in the persuasion that they that be with us are more than they that be against us. Then shall we feel that we are running our race, not obscurely, but compassed about with a great cloud of witnesses,—by patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and martyrs ; by all the spirits of the just made perfect ; by the dear friends who have gone before us to heaven ; by angels, principalities, and powers ; and, above

all, by the great Captain of our salvation, who was himself made perfect, through sufferings, and who is ever near to encourage and to help us. Then shall we lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset us, and run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith, who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. Heaven, which we are too much disposed to throw far off, will then draw nigh us and lie around us, and come into contact with the affairs and feelings of every day, and give us songs in the night, and light in the hour of darkness, and rob us of our sorrows by putting us in possession of its joys.

Brethren, these things are not pictures: I believe, in my soul, that they are realities—that they are the only abiding realities; and, what is infinitely more important than my belief or any other man's, God, with whom alone is certain knowledge—who is himself, in his self-subsistence and eternity, the only permanent basis of reality—has revealed them to us as the only certainties to which we can trust. Nothing else possesses the worth which it seems to have, and all things else are unstable and frail. Wealth takes to itself wings and flies away; popular applause depends upon popular caprice; the pleasures of domestic affection lie at the mercy of death; all things visible change while we are looking upon them, and we ourselves are passing away—"Man dieth and goeth to his long home, and the

mourners go about the streets;" whole generations of men sweep over the face of the earth, like the shadow of the fast-sailing cloud flying over the plain; the earth itself and the heavens, so real and solid seeming, are growing old, and shall soon reel to and fro like a drunkard, and be utterly broken down and clean dissolved. But through all these commotions and changes among the things that are seen—the surging, ever-shifting phenomena of time and sense; through the fires of the last day, the things that are unseen pass unchanged, and there they stand upon the high table-land of eternity, like him who 'is himself their sum and substance, without variableness or shadow of turning, "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever."

Blessed, thrice blessed are they who are now steadfastly looking at these things. How much, on the contrary, are they to be pitied who are living only for the things that are seen, unmindful of the destruction that lieth in wait for them! Pilgrims of the earth! heirs of immortality! can ye not be made to see that ye are spending your strength for that which is not bread, and laboring for that which satisfieth not? Oh, that ye could gain somewhat of that view with which ye will look back from beyond the vail, upon these transitory scenes that now fix your chief regard! Oh, how will ye then curse that gold and honour, and sinful pleasure, of which there will then remain only the memory to eat like fire into the soul!

Yes, Christian brethren, though ye can now see only as through a glass darkly, yet these imperfect

glimpses of eternal things are more worth to you than all beside. The visions, in which the mystic ladder is set from earth to heaven, comprise the real truths of our condition; and its dreamy illusions are the trusted views of its waking sense. Let us labor, then, with due diligence and prayer, with much inward reflection and study of God's holy word, that we may ever keep this world before our minds in its just relation to the world to come; and if prone to murmur under the meagreness of our knowledge and the weakness of our faith, let our conscious sense of disparity between the possibilities and the actual achievements of our lot lead us to look forward to the grave as the portal through which we are to pass from this outward vestibule through the inner veil, where we shall look, with the open intuition of a free spirit, upon that glory which now only dimly reveals itself to us through the opaque symbols by which we are here surrounded. Towards that day, which is to succeed the long night of our restless, feverish tossings, let us bend and look forward, like those that watch for the morning. Blessed day! when we shall see as we are seen, and know as we are known!

THE CHRISTIAN PHILOSOPHY OF REVOLUTION.

BY

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“Thus saith the Lord God; remove the diadem and take off the crown: this shall not be the same: exalt him that is low, and abase him that is high. I will overturn, overturn, overturn it: and it shall be no more, until he come whose right it is; and I will give it him.”—EZEK. xxi: 26, 27.

THE true philosophical history of man, is that which reveals to us the causes and progress, first, of his depravity and deterioration; and secondly, of his return towards that state of holiness and happiness which he is destined, in the purpose of God, and through the agency of the gospel, again to attain. Such a history is yet to be written. The attempts to evolve the philosophy of history, have been, for the most part, vitiated, by the assumption, derived from the pagan classics, that the civilization of the human race began in a condition of the lowest barbarism. There never was a more superficial or unfounded hypothesis, than that which ascribes the evolutions of human history, to a law of progressive development, inherent in the

human constitution. No plausible foundation for such a law can be found, except by an induction of facts, the most partial and inconclusive. In any complete survey of history, the facts which contradict such a law, are quite as numerous as those which support it. The great majority of the human race at any given time has been clearly either retrograding, or else stationary; while the progressive portion has been the merest fraction of the whole. And, farther, the progressive feature of that portion, has always been due; not to a blind, inherent law, but to some external agency, acting upon it from without, and in accordance with a plan extrinsic to itself. If the actual historic progress of the race were due to an intrinsic law, it ought, like all the laws of nature, to be constant in its tendencies, and uniform in its results. What then, it may be asked, becomes of this law of development, in the case of the Greeks since the days of Alexander, of the Romans since the time of Augustus, or of the Spaniards since the days of Ferdinand.

It is notorious, that so far from this assumed law of progress being the true expression of the facts, the progression which the history of the race exhibits, has been in cycles, and not in straight lines. In accordance with the principle announced by the prophet of Jehovah to the profane and wicked Prince of Israel, it has been a process of *revolution* and not of *development*. It involves the law of declension and decay, as much as that of quickening and growth. It is a vital, not a mechanical,—a

moral, not a physical, process. It proceeds upon a plan indeed ; but it is a plan exterior to the great collective mind of humanity. It is a development in the scheme of Divine Providence, with reference to the destiny of man ; and not the mere unfolding of capabilities inherent in unaided human nature.

It is impossible to comprehend aright the nature of that plan of human affairs, which it is the province of history to reveal, without a just apprehension of the moral truths which it involves, and on which it proceeds.

And in the first place, the origin of the human race was not from a state of barbarism, but one of absolute perfection ; and the first change which passed upon human nature, was that by which it fell into degeneracy, by reason of temptation from without. Social happiness was blighted and perished in the bud. The very first offspring of the social state, instead of love, sympathy, and mutual support, were, first, envy, then hatred, and lastly murder. Alienation and division, thus became at once, the universal law of society. And it is evident the race must have soon become extinct, or else produced a terrestrial pandemonium, if God had not determined to redeem it ; and applied the antidote to check, at least in part, the fatal workings of the poison.

From the moment of the announcement of that determination, began the great conflict of humanity,—the conflict between the two principles of sin and grace: the universal prevalence of the one tending to corrupt and ruin the race, the other,

under the special agency of God himself, struggling and destined to purify and redeem it. The history of this conflict, is the true history of man. It is not the rise and fall of nations,—it is not the growth and decay of institutions, domestic, social or political,—it is not the arts of war or peace;—it is the inward life of the race,—the changes in human nature, which all these indicate, from holiness to sin, and from sin to holiness,—it is the restoration of humanity to the image and favour of God, and the wonderful developments of God's providence to accomplish this result, in the different nations, ages and dispensations of history, that the Christian philosopher regards with most absorbing interest, and seeks to disengage from the tangled plot of human events.

Our limits and our special aim, forbid us to enter into any particular illustration, or proof, of the leading principles we propose to apply to the solution of the startling events of our age. We must be content with their simple statement; leaving it to the knowledge of our hearers, to confirm or to set them aside.

And in the first place, the earliest ages of the world after the fall, when the light of revealed truth was dimmest, and the reign of grace most feeble, were marked by a rapid degeneration, physical, intellectual, and moral, in the nature, the character, and the condition of man. The poison of sin worked, till it shortened human life from almost a thousand years, to three score and ten,—till the perception of truth was almost extinguished, and

men, even the most civilized and enlightened, became debased enough to humble themselves in religious worship, before beasts and creeping things; and until their moral nature was so corrupted, that virtue and religion were preserved alive upon the earth, only by the special interposition of God himself. Twice, in different forms, was this expedient resorted to,—thus making and closing respectively two great epochs of history:—first, in the selection and divine preservation of the single family of Noah; and, secondly, when the repopled earth had lapsed into universal corruption and idolatry, by selecting a faithful branch from the dominant race of the age, and organizing it under theocratic institutions, subject to his own immediate control. This single nation which was destined to multiply into a great and powerful people, and isolated from the other divisions of the race, was to serve as the depository of truth and religion, while the work of overturning and overturning went on among the other nations of the earth, until he should come, whose right it was to assume the sceptre, and found upon their ruins a dispensation, which shall terminate these countless overturnings, by the redemption of the world; and thus consummate the perfection of humanity on earth, and blend with it the glory of the God of Providence and grace.

In the second place, when the power of sin was checked by larger gifts of gracious influence, the power of divine truth became diffusive, and entered upon its aggressive work, in the achievement of man's regeneration; and has continued to the pre-

sent hour, progressive: and judging from the history of the past, and the characteristics of the present, as well as the prophetic delineation of the future, it will continue steadily progressive, till its final and perfect consummation.

By man's regeneration we mean his entire and complete regeneration, moral and intellectual, individual and social. The proofs of his past progress in all these respects, are as numerous as the incidents which make up his history. And yet it is obvious that no form of civilization yet reached, even by the most favoured nations of Christendom, can be accepted as even an approximate embodiment of that stage of human perfection which the race is destined to reach. Pervading and comprehensive as the historical agencies of the past have been, it is clear they are destined to be vastly more pervading and comprehensive still, before the period can arrive, when the Apocalyptic angel shall proclaim that the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ.

In the third place, the great agent by which this progress has been carried forward, is that of revolution, or that of overturning, overturning, overturning, till he shall come whose right it is to wear the crown of universal dominion, amidst the redeemed race of man.

In any comprehensive survey of the subject, the central epoch of human history, is the advent of the Son of God. Everything anterior to that event, pointed to the incarnation as embracing the

fulness of its significancy, and everything subsequent derives its vitality and power from the same source. The revolutionary incidents of the ages preceding, had for their function to prepare the world for the coming of Christ; those succeeding, are charged with the business of consummating the great object which brought the Son of God into the world, as the source and head of a new spiritual seed, that will ultimately absorb in its ever widening sweep, the entire and ransomed races of Adam.

However difficult it may be to trace, with philosophic accuracy, the precise relations of the great master epochs of the early periods of history, there can no longer be a doubt of their reality. To the eye of the Christian, and in the light of the Bible, those vast and sublime overturnings which reared and overthrew, successively, the gigantic empires of Egypt, Assyria, Persia, and Macedon, to say nothing of countless smaller states, which concentrated the intellect, the genius and the cultivation of the world in the States of Greece, and finally enthroned Rome as sole mistress of the earth, these all appear as mighty and indispensable agencies, commissioned of God, to produce that mental culture that feeling of strong unsatisfied religious want, and that state of universal peace, which were essential to prepare the world for the advent of the Son of God.

The progress of the race to this result, was not by steady, uninterrupted marches; it has not been the mere evolution of a subjective law of progression: it has been by a succession of overturnings,

in which one nation after another has been thrown into the ascendant, for the obvious purpose, in each case, of working out some great problem of human welfare, or carrying to its utmost height, some single branch of human culture. Thus in the language of the prevailing school of historical philosophers, the dispensation of the Greeks was the æsthetic culture of humanity. No age of human improvement ever has excelled, or ever will excel, the arts of Greece. Even their philosophy and their morality were drawn from the same source, in the sensibilities of the soul, instead of being founded upon the objective truths of any divine revelation. They have settled the point for all coming time, that art however lofty and spiritual, cannot answer the ends, or take the place of religion as the true ulterior object of individual culture and still less as the life principle of a permanent or universal civilization.

So Rome was commissioned to work out a system of jurisprudence and municipal law, for the human race; to conquer the barbarism of the world, and then to clothe its naked forms with the institutions of an intellectual civilization. Her mission was to prepare the world for the incarnation of the Son of God, who was to found upon the boundless domain of her vast and peaceful empire, the glorious temple of Christian truth and Christian worship. And now in like manner we believe the peculiar dispensation of the age, and specifically of the race to which we belong, is to leaven the philosophy, the literature, the morality, and the civil and poli-

tical institutions of the world, with the religion of the Bible, and then carry their elevating purifying influence throughout the earth.

This is the last of the great dispensations of the world's progressive history. The true and final *civilization* of the race, as statesmen and philosophers delight to call it, is just that which owes to Christianity both the life of its being, and the law of its forms. Much as politicians may overlook or deride the notion, it is true that the only form of civilization capable of embracing the whole human family,—the only form that ever can become universal,—is that which owes its being and its power, to the gospel. The civilization of Greece was incomplete and local, that of Rome was temporary and subservient to ulterior purposes. We repeat, the only true civilization, capable of combining and enlightening, of purifying and elevating the race of man, is Christianity itself. This is the divine principle of human civilization. It was designed for the whole family of man; and it will therefore embrace the whole. It will absorb and incorporate all that is true and noble in the art and literature of Greece, the legislation and jurisprudence of Rome, the freedom and the industrial, economic, and commercial enterprise of the Teutonic races,—all that is beautiful, and true, and good, and great; and founding the structure upon the divine atonement of Jesus Christ as the only relief from the conscious crushing guilt of the human bosom, and the renewing and sanctifying power of the Spirit of God as the only possible source of its regeneration and

purification, it will stand forth, like the New Jerusalem of the Prophetic Scriptures resplendent in the light of heaven, the sanctuary and the home of all the nations of the earth.

The process we have indicated is going on with ever-increasing velocity: and in our day its elements are driven under impulses of almost fearful impetuosity. Changes are passing upon the internal policy and the outward face of nations, with a rapidity as much greater than those of the early ages of history, as the modes of locomotion, and the intercourse of the world, have been improved, by the agencies of steam and magnetic electricity. The progress of human events toward their ultimate goal, like some mighty mass acted upon by a constant mechanical force, is ever accelerating as it advances. This is pre-eminently true of the very point of time now passing. The plot thickens. Events crowd with ever-accumulating momentum toward the appointed end.

The application of these principles toward the solution of the recent revolutionary and reactionary movements of the world, in the present chaotic period of its history, opens a topic of great interest, by no means free of difficulty. If the claims we have set up for Christianity, as the great agent of human enfranchisement, and social elevation and progress, are well founded, it may be asked how it comes that all the Christian governments in the old world, are absolute and despotic, both in form and in fact. To reply to this inquiry intelligently, we must recall the circumstances under which Chris-

tianity entered upon its work of human redemption. It will be remembered that it found the world under the dominion of despotism, temporarily enthroned for the purpose of keeping the peace, in expectation of its legitimate ruler. It is easy to see, therefore, how the declaration of the great founder of Christianity was necessarily to be fulfilled;—that he came not to send peace on the earth, but a sword. The dominion usurped and tacitly conceded to absolute power, must first be dispossessed of its unnatural authority, before Christianity could fulfill its mission of social enfranchisement. It could not effect its object in behalf of the race, without diffusing abroad that enlightenment and moral virtue, which are incompatible with the persistent reign of civil despotism. The instantaneous result, therefore, of its entrance upon its assigned work of personal regeneration and enfranchisement, was just what its author declared it would be, and just what the past and current history of the world shows that it must be,—a steady conflict with the dominant passions of the human bosom, as concentrated into the various forms of despotic government. Wherever, in its early resistless march, it invaded the kingdom of darkness and tyranny, it awakened hostility and drew on a conflict; because it stood in natural and necessary antagonism with these vices of human society,—just as light is in natural antagonism with darkness. And as the universal establishment of Christian liberty, founded on the universal prevalence of truth and holiness, was the very end of all history, and as its triumph

was predetermined in the original plan of the moral ruler of the world, it followed that the general conflict in which Christianity became involved with the absolute governments of the world, must ultimately lead to their overthrow; and thus consummate again the great principle of the text,—overturning and overturning, with a view to the final establishment of that kingdom, which alone could be perpetual, because it alone was consistent with the complete enfranchisement, and the highest interest of man.

It is clear, therefore, that the repugnance and intolerance, which the absolute governments of the world have always manifested toward evangelical Christianity, is founded on a blind, but unerring instinct. Christianity and despotism cannot co-exist; because Christianity not only inculcates, but actually introduces the highest form of human freedom, in that liberty wherewith Christ makes his people free. And it is equally plain, that where the people are not only awakened to the intimate consciousness of their right to be free, but actually invested with that right, by the authority of God himself, and at the same time are made adequately aware of their power as well as their rights, there is no domination on earth or in hell, that can hold them in bondage. Where is the tyrant who could hold a nation of Luthers under the yoke of civil despotism?

But it may be objected to this reasoning, in favor of the essential enfranchising tendencies of the Gospel, that Christianity was the religion of

Rome in the days of its darkest tyranny, and continues to be the religion of the despotic governments of modern Europe.

We acknowledge the fairness of the objection; and accept the challenge to reconcile the historical fact, with the claims we have been making in behalf of Christianity;—and all the more readily, because the principles involved are absolutely vital to the prosperous issue of the present exciting revolutionary period of history.

It must be remembered, then, that all stable and efficient government requires a religious support, and cannot be administered or perpetuated, except by the help of religious sanctions. When Christianity was deposited in the bosom of human society, it necessarily entered into reaction, not with the authority, but the abuses of existing institutions. Such was the light it shed upon those dark abuses, and such the might with which it shook the hoary pillars of despotic Rome, and spread its influence through her vast domain, that it soon became apparent on which side the victory must ultimately declare. To prevent a result so disastrous to herself, and for which the world was yet unprepared, the government itself, under Constantine, by a stroke of policy the most masterly and adroit, set itself to cement a league between the Church and the State; and thus avail itself for its own aggrandizement, of the power against which it was plainly unable to cope in open hostility. This alliance is the key to the history of the middle ages. Christianity was simply thrown into the heart of society, as a personal embodiment

of the divine life, which was to disenthral and redeem mankind. Before it was in a condition to achieve its great social mission for the race, it was necessary that it should grapple with all the forms of belief which had held possession of the human mind, and had served to give form and vitality to the existing institutions of society. A process like this was indispensable to bring the Christian religion into broad and quickening contact with all the varied forms of social life. It had been revealed as a principle of individual belief, and of personal salvation. But it could not stop here. A new and divine life, such as it was the object of the gospel to impart, could not fail to pervade and leaven every element of human society. It was destined to correct the errors of its philosophy, and mitigate, and ultimately abolish, the rigors and abuses of its social and political institutions. To do this, it was necessary that it should be cast into the established formulas of human thought, and incorporated into the intellectual, as well as the moral, life of the race. So that a revelation, which was primarily the element of personal regeneration, and individual holiness,—and as such existed in a form already complete, and incapable of development in the teachings of Christ and his apostles,—was to become in addition the living principle of the intellectual, the social, and even the political institutions of the world. In this process, Christianity was necessarily to be transformed from a concrete or subjective embodiment of living Christian truth in the heart and life of its disciples, into

abstract formulas of belief and of practice; or in other words, into logical creeds, embracing all the points of doctrine and of duty, which were essential to the complete fulfillment of the task assigned it, in the intellectual and civil, as well as personal regeneration of mankind.*

Now it was precisely this preparatory process of intellectual action and reaction, of sifting, elimination and settlement, applied to Christian doctrine, which constituted the distinctive task of the early and middle ages of the Christian history of the world; when the intellect of Christendom was concentrated in the monastic schools of Europe, and the active, logical, and metaphysical discussions of the schoolmen settled what was, or rather was not, the true faith of the Church. Such was the characteristic and invaluable function of a period and a class of men, commonly so little appreciated. The period has been stigmatized as the dark ages of

* It is hoped the tenor and spirit of this discourse will make it sufficiently apparent that what is meant in the text is widely different from what has been so often expressed in nearly analogous language, by a current popular school of infidel philosophers, who apply the favorite dogma of development to the teachings of a complete and closed revelation. Both as a system of doctrines and appliances for the conversion of men, and as a rule of life for their guidance, Christianity was completed when the canon of the New Testament was closed. But it is obvious that the relation of Christianity to an innumerable multitude of questions, in the social and political life of the race, could be ascertained and settled only by a long process of comparison and trial. To accomplish this, or even distinctly to conceive and propose it, would require, as we have expressed it above, that it should first "be cast into the established formulas of human thought," as worked out in the consciousness, and accumulated in the experience, of successive ages. It is only in this sense that we accept the doctrine of a development in Christianity, viz., a development in its *applications* to the complex forms of human well-being—a development that is parallel, if not identical, with that of God's plan, as unfolded in history, for the final redemption of the human race.

human history, and they were dark enough, in regard to the intellectual and social degradation of the masses of the people; but we should not forget that it was in the womb of their darkness that the hand of Providence was fashioning the germs of those truer and more Christian forms of social and political life, which it is the province of modern history to evolve into the highest types of Christian civilization. Preparatory to this indispensable process, and while it was still going on, Christianity had already, as we have seen, entered into alliance with the dominant powers of Europe; and in one aspect, at least, it was a merciful Providence that it was permitted to do so. For it was already apparent that no human power was adequate, without the aid of Christian sanctions, to preserve its own stability, and keep, as by iron rigor, the peace of the world through that most turbulent period of human history. But, of course, in lending its power to such a purpose, Christianity itself, in its courtly aspects, became corrupt, and degenerated into a system of concentrated despotism that was universal and complete; because it involved in its endless folds the souls, and finally the minds, as well as bodies, of its victims. Thus, in its political form, it ceased in the end to be a true expression of genuine Christianity at all. And when the work of the schools was completed, and the true faith of the Church was ready to come from its hidden retreats, in the form of a settled and compacted logical creed, instinct with the glorious evangelical spirit of the great Reformation, the whole sustained

by the revealed Word of God, in the dauntless hands of Luther and the other Reformers, then it was that Christianity entered upon its last great dispensation, viz., that of going forth to its final and triumphant conflict, with the ignorance and the vices which are the sources alike of the despotisms and the miseries of earth, with a view to the universal diffusion and ultimate establishment of the Gospel of Christ. And this, we repeat, is the true and real mission which this stirring revolutionary age is preparing to inaugurate.

In the light of these principles we are prepared to explain another phenomenon of the present epoch, which, at first sight, seems incompatible with the views now presented, viz., that the revolutionary movements of the times have been chiefly in the hands of radicals in religion as well as government, instead of the apostles of genuine Christianity.

We remark, in the first place, then, that the restlessness which is expressing itself in these movements is the result of the deep and living consciousness of unsatisfied wants, and the earnest conviction of rights unjustly withheld,—that, in other words, it is the legitimate and necessary consequence of the gradual spread of that light, whose fountain is in the word of God, and which, in virtue of its divine origin, like the light of day upon the statue of the vocal Memnon, wakes the latent harmonies of faith and hope in the gloomy bosom of the nations. That these overturnings never could have occurred unless they had been preceded by a great and comprehensive

reformation of religion, both doctrinal and spiritual, like that of the sixteenth century, is susceptible of easy proof, if it is not intuitively clear, from this simple statement of the facts. That the movements themselves have so generally taken on a form hostile to true religion, is easily explained.

In the first place, the very ignorance in which the people have been kept, tends to blind them to the true nature of the relief they are seeking, as well as the true means of its attainment. Light enough has struggled through the murky atmosphere of despotism, to reveal to men their higher spiritual tendencies and hopes, and the magnitude and weight of the burdens which have crushed them to the earth; but not enough to disclose the real source of these evils, and still less, the adequate and only means of their redress. In the instinctive effort to struggle up into a higher sphere of life, they first encounter the hopeless, social disabilities, and crushing political burdens, arising from the despotic governments which time has consolidated over their heads; and it is natural, therefore, that they should first seek relief, by the frantic and radical attempt to overthrow and trample in the dust the immediate instruments of their oppression and wrong. Hence the discontent and wretchedness of these restive classes of the old world, seek vent in revolutionary attempts, directed against the established governments of Europe. It may be long before their enlightenment is sufficiently advanced, and may require many and bitter and bloody experiences of failure, to convince them of the

emptiness of all other resources, and shut them up to the faith of Christianity, as the fundamental and indispensable condition of any sufficient or complete relief.

But, secondly, this alienation and repugnance to religion is the more natural, because the only form in which Christianity is known to these revolutionary advocates of social rights, is that in which it stands before their eyes, as the grand ally of civil despotism, the very corner-stone and binding cement of the fearful structure, which tyranny has reared upon the blood and bones of slaughtered and starving millions. No wonder, therefore, that their avowed aim is so often the extinction of Christianity; since, in their estimation, by reason of its vicious alliance with the State, it is the very breath and life, the very heart and soul of every living despotism on the Continent of Europe.

And in the last place, it is not to be disguised, that Christianity encounters their hatred, because it has no fellowship with the spirit in which these radical movements are often conducted, any more than it has with the oppression and wrong, against which they are aimed. Besides the universal dislike of the human heart to the characteristic doctrines of the Gospel, it is clear that the fanaticism and violence and bloodshed, which mark the track of civil revolutions, are rebuked by the Christianity of the New Testament, with the same calm and severe majesty, with which it denounces inevitable overthrow against the men and the measures

which extinguish the lights of human knowledge and human hope in the dark bosom of society.

The significance of this extraordinary epoch can be understood, not by confining our attention to the character of the agencies which have produced it,—for these are often low in their origin, and blind in their intelligence, and evil in their intentions,—but by studying it deeply, as a historical development of the divine purpose which pervades all history as its life-principle, and to which all agencies, however blind and however bad, are alike subjected, and compelled to do its will. What the specific purpose of God, now in process of evolution is, may be a subject of great doubt; but that there is a divine purpose to be accomplished, is as certain as that there is a God. The Providence that is implicated in the fall of a sparrow, cannot be foreign to the downfall, or the destiny, of the great dynasties of the earth. The true intent and meaning of these overturnings is to be sought, not in the establishment of this or that form of government, as though the construction of political institutions was the chief end of man, but in their tendency to bring the living truth of God, in its quickening and sanctifying power, into vital contact with the heart of humanity. This is the true problem which modern history is to solve. It is not the low and imperfect form of political freedom, which, at best, is but a well-contrived system of checks and restraints upon the natural passions of men, but the universal establishment of that spiritual freedom, which is not only infinitely higher, but which admits of

being absolute, just because it always chooses freely to do right. It is this which constitutes the true key to the mysteries of Providence. Whatever else may come from these overturnings, one thing is certain, in the light of history as well as prophecy, that they all tend to give increased scope to the Word of God, and open wider and more effectual doors to the appointed agencies for its inculcation. Whatever absolutism may do, it cannot any longer bind the Word of God. It is to compel the hoary despotisms of the earth to strike the fetters from the soul of man, that God is causing the very ground to rock beneath them. They have, at no distant day, to make their election between a total change of policy, with reference to the enlightenment and freedom which the Gospel brings to mankind, or their own downfall.

We are not enunciating a philosophy of history, and still less, pretending to foretell the historical details of the future: we are simply dealing with the cardinal laws which govern its development: and though it is one of the surest tests of true science, that it enables us to predict, yet it requires a knowledge of conditions, as well as laws, to fulfill this requirement: and even then, the remoteness or complexity of the result may transcend the powers of any human calculus to compute. We may know the laws of hydrodynamics never so certainly; but we may not, nevertheless, be able to trace out the course of a body committed to the conflicting impulses of an angry flood: so, however true and important the principles we have been

striving to illustrate, they may not, still, enable us to foretell the course and the issue of the great stirring events of this turbulent period of human progress. Whether the old institutions of Europe, its hereditary monarchies, its spiritual hierarchies, and especially its master-piece of spiritual despotism, the papacy, are to be finally and utterly destroyed, may perhaps be a question, but that their flagrant wrongs and abuses are, is not only a certainty, but, we may almost say, a fact accomplished. Who imagines, for a moment, that the later reactions in favor of absolutism are, or can be, permanent? Who does not see that they are procured by means which necessarily involve other and more fearful retributory reactions? There is nothing in them that looks like permanence or stability. The thing is impossible. We should just as soon expect the Mississippi or the Amazon, the snow-fed Danube or the arrowy Rhone, to pause in their glad and triumphant course. The great current of human enfranchisement, like every other obstructed current, must have its eddies, but its flow is onward, and irresistible. Russia, that awful incarnation of human despotism, may throw into the stream her fifty millions of slaves, and then pile upon them the thirty millions of poor, miserable, ignominious Austria, in order to dam up and arrest its resistless flow; but the very weight of its accumulated waters will soon sweep them away, like straws on the plunge of the cataract. Whether any of the late gains of the spirit of liberty can be maintained, is more than questionable: but whether they can or

not, that higher freedom of the Gospel—without which, the change from absolute monarchy to republicanism, is but a change from the despotism of the intelligent but selfish few, to the despotism of the blind, and more selfish and brutal many,—is destined to be advanced by these overturnings, and finally enthroned supreme in the confidence and hearts of men. This, surely, cannot be doubted by any one who studies their causes, or comprehends the true nature of history, as an evolution of the divine purpose, with reference to man.* Even

* The late reaction in favor of despotism in France, the news of which reached us after this paragraph was penned, furnishes a curious illustration of the principles of this discourse. The solution of what seems to excite so general surprise and disappointment, appears to be abundantly clear. France, by the election of a military usurper, has pronounced her unequivocal judgment, that she was not prepared for the institutions of constitutional liberty. In the emphatic language of one of her ablest statesmen, of a former revolution, *La France doit avoir une religion*—France must have a religion. In the absence of that prime condition of civil freedom, the choice of the country lay between the evils of anarchy on the one hand, and those of a military despotism on the other: and France has chosen the latter, as immeasurably the least of the two. The material interests of the country all demand peace, in order to prosperity; and peace is impossible at present in France, except under the strong hand of absolute power. But let the principles of religion and education so leaven the masses, that liberty can be entered as one of the possible conditions, compatible with the peace of the country, and then see how the nation will rise in its might, and sweep away the treacherous perfidy of a tyrannical usurper, as the majestic king of the forest would brush an annoying, envenomed insect from his flanks. To suppose that such a government can stand an hour, after its felt necessity has passed away, is to suppose that perjury, and violence, and perfidy can command the confidence and support of honest and true men. It is to suppose that history has no appointed goal—no great ulterior purpose to achieve in behalf of humanity. It is to ignore every lesson of the past, and every hope of the future; it is to dethrone Jehovah, and to put the reins of the universe into the hands of chance, or of Satan. There can be no stronger statement of the doom that hangs over the cause of despotism, than to say, that it contravenes the plans of the Almighty, for the benefit of the race; as clearly revealed in history as well as prophecy.

If the cause of Hungary could be detached from that of Continental Eu-

the wildest devices of folly which characterize the social movements of the age, Fourierism in France, Republicanism in Germany and Italy, Chartism in England, and Repeal in Ireland, are the earnest expression of felt wants, which Christianity alone can relieve. That some of them are infidel in their spirit and their supporters, is the result, not so much of intelligent hatred of the Gospel, as of simple ignorance as to what the Gospel is.

And yet even in these visionary and fanatical outbursts of the radical revolutionary spirit, the instincts of the heart are often true to their object, when the darkened intellect wholly fails to recognize their true nature, or set them forth in the clear light of the reason. The watch-words of the down-trodden classes of the old world—*liberty, equality, fraternity*—are not so far from the embodiment of the true and fundamental principles of that very civilization which yet awaits the human race. But as to the sources whence these blessings are to come, they are, by the necessities of their previous condition, wholly in the dark.

rope, we might hope to see the beginning of the end speedily initiated. Four millions of Protestants, with nearly 3,000 churches, might serve as a foundation for the political and religious freedom of a nation of ten millions of people, if they were instinct with the life of true evangelical religion. And whatever doubt there may be on this latter point, there can be none, that the truth is making rapid progress among them, and that the time is not far distant when these fundamental conditions of success will be reached. No proposition seems clearer to us, than that the coming history of Europe is to embody the conflict between Protestantism and civil freedom on the one hand, and the Church of Rome and despotism on the other. The very forms, as well as the spirit, of the Romish Church have been developed under conditions which made it essentially despotic; and the final freedom of Europe is impossible, under the absolute dominion of that church, as well as under the anarchy incident to the prevalence of infidelity or atheism.

The "liberty" which they are blindly struggling after, in the turbulent and bloody track of radicalism, is to be realized in the enfranchisement of the gospel, and grounded on that personal liberty wherewith Christ makes his people free. The "equality," to which their inward convictions assure them they are entitled, is not an agrarian equality of social and material position, but an equality in human rights, founded on an equality of moral condition and desert in the sight of God: and the "fraternity," emblazoned on their motto, is the genuine, but it may be perverted heart-utterance of the conscious right to membership in that common brotherhood of humanity, which springs out of the common Fatherhood of God. The whole and every item, of this ideal longing of humanity in its most degraded and dangerous forms, and which has been moulded into the war-cry of modern revolution, is destined to fulfilment; but in a form and from a source widely different from that to which the ignorant and vicious and dangerous paupers and outcasts of the world, are looking for succour. They shall yet enjoy all, and more than all, their brightest hopes: but only as a fruit of the gospel of Christ. Let them see, as they ultimately will see, that all they have conceived, and infinitely more, is attainable, as the free gift of a gracious salvation, the purchase of the Son of God by the sacrifice of the cross, and how will they not joyfully embrace the gospel which does satisfy, in lieu of empty and absurd theories which do not. It is this blind but energetic feeling after truth, which

awakens in us the hope, that truth will ultimately be found. That the first attempts are wild and fruitless, and therefore subject to repeated disappointments and reverses, results necessarily from their being made in the dark. But the very fact that they are fruitless, will compel their earnest authors to grope on till light comes. And it is morally impossible that light should fail to reach them ere long, from some of the innumerable sources, from which it is streaming all over Christendom. We are not of those who regard these struggles of oppressed humanity either with unmingled dislike or despair; or who would withdraw the sympathies of the Christian world from their sufferings, because they are sometimes baptized with the spirit of an optimist infidelity. Even if many of them are atheists at heart, they are yet human beings; and as such have an immortal interest at stake, in the redemption and the hopes of the gospel; and are therefore accessible,—most invitingly accessible,—to its ministry of mercy. And there is no conviction more clear or unalterable to us, than that the hopes of a crushed and bleeding humanity are all conditioned upon the presence of Christianity, to an extent sufficient to control the movements, and animate the heart, and nerve the arm, of those who are to lead the destinies of mankind in the final great struggle for salvation and freedom.

Let men of the world, philosophers and statesmen, overlook and despise the Church, the living embodiment of Christianity;—let them regard

what Christians are doing to spread the gospel of the Son of God among men, as well enough in itself, but yet as boyish occupation, in comparison with their great schemes of national enterprise; they will one day find out, that it is this very Christianity, which is yet to occupy the vacant throne of the world: that all their expenditures and bloodshed, their turmoils and state craft, have been only contributing to this result; and that a power higher than the highest has uttered the decree,—“Thus saith the Lord God; remove the diadem and take off the crown: this shall not be the same: exalt him that is low and abase him that is high. I will overturn, overturn, overturn it, and it shall be no more, until he come whose right it is; and I will give it him.”

The work of revolution has often been more disastrous and bloody, but never, we believe, more universal and pervading, than it is at this moment. Without the light of revelation, we might well be alarmed in attempting to guess whereto these events are tending. But in the full blaze of that light, the Christian believer may watch their accelerating progress, not only without dismay, but with a full and joyous confidence, that they are all fulfilling the resistless will of Him, who “hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm;” the great law of whose Providence, as revealed in universal nature, both animate and inanimate, hath ever been to educe from the revolution and overthrow of one dispensation, another more lofty, more glorious and more perfect; and whose final triumph will be

inaugurated, when the blast of the Apocalyptic trumpet shall proclaim to the universe, that the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.

POWER AND PERPETUITY OF LAW.*

BY

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"It is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail."
—ST. LUKE xvii. 17.

IF you have read the Pentateuch and especially the books of Exodus and Leviticus with care, you have perhaps wondered why a system of laws, so complicated, so careful of little things, so rigidly exact in its directions about them, should ever have been enacted. Viewing it in certain aspects, it may be that a sort of half suspicion has crossed your minds that legislation of this kind is really unworthy of such a being as God. But when the purpose of its Divine Author is seen, when the relation of the Law of Moses to the Jews as a separated people, and to the Gospel dispensation is fully understood, the whole system appears in quite a new light. The marks of divine wisdom and goodness are clearly discernible in all its parts, even in its minutest details. Every law has a reason, every ceremony has a meaning, every rite becomes instinct with the most precious truth.

* Preached in the Chapel of the College of New Jersey.

This Mosaic code is "the Law" spoken of in the text. It embodied many precepts of universal application, and eternal authority,—it included, indeed, the whole moral law, but as a code, it was enacted for a specific end, and was to continue in force for a specific period. Until this end was gained, and this period completed, not a jot or tittle of it could be annulled. When the Son of God exclaimed with his expiring breath, from that cross to which he had been nailed as the sacrifice for human guilt, "it is finished," and as if in sympathy with him the "veil of the temple rent in twain," then the reign of this Law terminated. But until that very moment had come, it could and did claim the reverent homage and exact obedience of every Jew. The system possessed all the mighty power of Law—nothing could set it aside. To regard or to treat any one of its provisions as an effete, or antiquated or useless thing, was in effect to charge the Divine Lawgiver with folly. Hence the strong language in which our Lord asserts its power, and its perpetuity until the fulness of the time had come. "*Heaven and earth may pass away, but one jot or tittle of the Law cannot fail.*"

These words announce a great truth; what is here affirmed of the Law in a distinctive sense is true of Law universally.

God, who called the universe into existence by the word of his power, governs it according to the counsel of his own will. The creatures animate and inanimate which make up the universe have been placed by Him under laws suited to their

several natures, and to the respective ends which they are intended to subserve. We know that this is so from our own observation of those parts of creation which come under our notice; and whether we reason from the properties of the creature or the perfections of the Creator, we are entitled to infer that the same thing holds good of the universe at large; in other words, wherever a creature exists there is a law that reaches and governs it.

Now the great truth which the text asserts is this, viz., that the laws which govern the universe are of infinitely more consequence than the universe itself,—that it is of unspeakably more importance that the former should be maintained than that the latter should exist,—that all the creatures of God, rational and irrational, should obey the laws to which He has been pleased to subject them, that they should work in harmony with these enactments, than that any or all of them should be kept in being. Glorious as are all the works of God, yet if you should take any one of them, consider it apart from all others, or view it as a mere isolated thing, you would perceive little if any excellence in it. It would indeed bespeak the creative energy of Him who made it, but you could not discover from it alone whether He is wise and good, or the reverse. It is only when you regard it in its relations to other things, and ascertain *why* it was made, and see its exact fitness to an end, that its real glory and greatness as a work of God shine forth. How beautiful to *us* is the spectacle of a field of waving corn? Its very

verdure is refreshing to the eye, because adapted to the structure of our organ of vision, while its yellow ripeness gives the promise of an abundant supply of the food we need. But—if we may imagine such a thing—transfer it to a world of creatures with a constitution totally unlike ours, its beauty would vanish because its fitness to an end would be lost. The glory of creation, then, arises mainly from the benign ends and perfect adaptations of its countless parts. And hence it is that the universe must be, as we have already said, “under law to God, and that the maintenance of the laws which govern it is vastly more important than the existence of the universe itself.

Let me illustrate this position by an example taken from the worlds above us. There are the heavenly bodies, which, under the dominion of law, revolve through their immense and seemingly complex circuits in perfect harmony and order, while with their mild radiance they relieve the darkness which, from night to night, gathers round us. Moving as they do with a majestic, a never-ceasing steadiness, the astronomer is enabled to measure their distances, their magnitudes, their orbits, to predict their places, and to calculate the reciprocal influence of planet upon planet; while the mariner, relying upon the lessons which astronomy has taught him, with an undoubting confidence that these starry guides never can mislead him, boldly pushes out his bark upon the trackless deep. In all this there is something *moral*. Though the objects themselves consist simply of unorganised

matter, yet the laws which govern them are most intimately connected with the convenience and the comfort of the dwellers upon earth, and thus the moral attributes of Him whose fiat gave being to the worlds that fill immensity,—His goodness, His wisdom, as well as His mightiness, are revealed. “The heavens declare the glory of God, the firmament showeth his handy work; day unto day uttereth speech, night unto night showeth knowledge of Him.”

In the working of the stupendous mechanism of the heavens, all is orderly and harmonious so long as the law which governs its movements is obeyed. But suppose the reverse of this to be the case—that the law of gravitation was liable to incessant interruptions, that the forces which produce the beautiful steadiness we now observe, operated according to no fixed rule, either as to direction or degree, so that satellites should rush off into boundless space, or dash furiously against each other, and the planets, starting from their orbits, should wander at their will through immensity, or should be suddenly deluged with the fogs or the flames (as the case may be) of a comet, while this fair earth of ours, according as chance drove her near to or distant from the sun, were converted into a fiery furnace, or a globe of ice. We may try to fancy the state of things under such a reign of anarchy, though the boldest imagination must come far short of the reality. But the main question is, can we suppose that God would suffer, even for a moment, such a lawless universe to exist? No. He is a “God of

order," and it were far better to remand creation to its original nothingness, than to permit disorder and confusion thus to gain the mastery over it; better annihilate it at once, than not maintain its laws in full supremacy and force. "Heaven and earth may pass away, but one jot or tittle of the laws shall not fail."

Let us, if you please, take another illustration from *the earth on which we dwell*. Here, too, we observe a grand and complicated system of physical operations incessantly going on, of physical laws perpetually at work. There is the refreshing alternation of day and night, the succession of the seasons, the rising and falling tides; seeds planted at the right time, and in proper soil, give back their kind with an increase of "some thirty, some sixty, some an hundred fold;" fire burns, food nourishes, poisons kill. But it is needless to enumerate, for it would take volumes to describe the countless and varied processes ever going forward in the vast laboratory of nature. Now, each and all of these have their laws, and when we have learned, by observation or experiment, what the law is in any given case, we know how to act for the present not only, but what to do through all coming time. Nature, or rather the God of nature, governs by fixed laws, and we rely with an undoubting confidence on their unvarying uniformity. While the earth endures, there will be seed-time and harvest, summer and winter, day and night; men lie down at evening confident that if they wake in the morning at all, they will see the sun come forth from the

east, prepared like the strong man to run his daily circuit ; the farmer plants his seed, and then waits in hope of reaping an abundant harvest ; the mariner can tell the exact moment when the tides will be high or low at any given point. But suppose that the whole of this wonderful economy of nature were mysteriously disturbed—that her processes, apparently so complicated, yet never confused, were suddenly left to chance, and were subject to no laws, so that men sowed fields and reaped nothing, and then again where they planted nothing, they reaped abundance ; so that their food one day ministered nourishment, and the next deadly poison ; nor could they tell whether the water they drank would quench or increase their thirst ; that the darkness of night, the light of day, the heat of summer, the frost of winter lasted through periods so indefinite, and were liable to changes so great and sudden, that none could predict what a moment would bring forth ; I ask, again, could God permit this goodly earth of ours to fall into a condition so utterly lawless and so destructive to all the creatures that dwell upon its surface ? No indeed. Better a thousand fold that it were blotted from existence than that it should become such a prey of anarchy, such a plaything of chance, without law, without life—a world as dishonouring to its Maker, as it would be intolerable for man.

But let us come nearer home and take an illustration from *man* himself. In whatever aspect we view him, whether as a physical, social, intellectual, or moral being, we find him the subject of laws,—

of laws unchangeable as the eternal Lawgiver himself; and, harsh as the announcement may sound, it is nevertheless true that not to maintain these laws would be a far greater evil than the destruction of the human race; better that men should perish than that these laws should be set aside. Alas! the ruin of human beings is not merely a contingent necessity, but a perpetually recurring fact. Myriads upon myriads of our race have already perished in consequence of violating those unchanging laws which God has enacted for their government. Every day beholds thousands perishing—destroyed in body, or in soul, or both, for time and for eternity. Let us see how the case stands with us. Our bodies “are under law to God;” they are subject to laws suited to the materials of which they are constructed, and to the purposes they are intended to subserve in the economy of life. They need food for their sustenance and growth, shelter from the inclemencies of the seasons, medicine when affected by disease. We may not trifle with any one of these laws, to which He who “formed us of clay and made us men,” hath subjected our physical nature. If we do, it is at our peril; for, although these laws are not enforced by precisely the same penalty, yet we should ever remember that each has a penalty of its own; and whether it be more or less severe, we must endure the punishment if we venture to violate the law. Let the motive which prompts a man to disregard the laws of health, or the manner in which the thing is done, be what it may, let him, for ex-

ample, turn night into day, whether he be a student, whose intense zeal for knowledge keeps him at his books, when he should be in his bed, or a miserable sensualist, who gives his midnight hours to revelry and banqueting, the inevitable result to him will be a ruined constitution. Be assured that if you will persist in drinking or in eating that which disorders your stomach, or shatters your nerves, you must pay the penalty which the law appoints to all who thus act. God will not modify the order He has established so as to suit the convenience of your depraved appetites ; He will not change His laws to accommodate either the unwise student, or the miserable sensualist. "Heaven and earth shall pass, but not one jot or tittle of His law."

So it is with men considered as *social* beings. There are laws of social life ordained of God, and though we cannot always trace their operation so distinctly as we can the working of those which govern the material creation, we may still be certain that the former are just as uniform and immutable as the latter. We only need to open our eyes and look at what is going on around us, to be convinced of this truth. Economy, diligence, prudence, truthfulness, unswerving probity, on the one hand, and extravagance, self-indulgence, falsehood, deceit, trickery, on the other, do not yield their respective fruits at random, or by chance. No. There is a law which renders these results invariable. "A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, nor a corrupt tree good fruit." What is the common proverb, "honesty is the best policy," but just the embodiment,

in words, of the conviction forced into the general mind, (if I may use the term,) by events of which men are daily the spectators or the subjects, "that verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth," and that within certain limits, even in this world, "He renders to every man according to his works." Men who oppress and defraud others sometimes grow rich, "panting after the dust of the earth on the head of the poor;" they may scrape together a great heap of gold, but wealth, in its highest and noblest sense, they neither do nor can possess. The trickster, the time-server, the two-faced flatterer, may secure the position or the office on which his heart is set, but real honour, and lasting power, he never wins. God's law forbids it. And the experience of all ages embodied in the proverbs of all nations, as well as the Word of Eternal Truth, proves that in the long run such men always reap their proper reward, and go at last to their own place. If the temporal penalty they have incurred does not invariably come down upon the offender's own head, it is an heir-loom for those who come after them; it descends as an entailed curse to their children. If then, my hearers, you are spared to enter the arena of public social life, remember that there are certain laws, immutable as their Author, by which you will be bound, while taking your part in those scenes in which you hope to share; and that it is only in the way of unswerving obedience to them, that any of you can expect to gain, what I am sure all of you desire, wealth, influence, comfort, the respect, the confidence, the admiring gratitude of

your fellow-men, honour in life, and a grave watered by the tears of the good. These are objects which cannot fail to awaken the warm aspirations of every generous soul; multitudes are perpetually and eagerly asking how can we obtain them, but though God has furnished a clear and certain answer to their inquiry, few succeed, because unwilling to pay the price which He demands, to comply with the conditions He has imposed, to obey the laws He has enacted.

Thus far we have viewed the teaching of our text mainly as it bears upon men's present interests and their earthly life. It contains lessons of still higher moment. We know that this world is the prelude of another, and even here below, we have, in the relation of youth to age, a striking image of the relation which subsists between this world and the next, between our present life and the everlasting life to come. Youth is the season of preparation for mature manhood, and this circumstance, which might well impart a sober seriousness even to hopeful and joyous childhood, never fails to fill the heart of the thoughtful parent with profound anxiety. Ordinarily what the youth is, is the man; and hence that exhortation and promise of Holy Writ—"Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." There are, no doubt, occasional exceptions to the rule, for He whose grace alone can renovate any soul, is a Sovereign, working all things according to the counsel of His own will; He can change the lion into the lamb, and at any period of life can convert the

most abandoned of sinners into the noblest of saints, "raising him from the dunghill to a seat among the princes of his people." Still universal experience proves that the law before stated, and implied in the Scripture already quoted, holds good—that "the child is the father of the man;" that the impressions we receive during our early years are most enduring, and give shape and complexion to our future character. And hence, even a Pagan satirist could utter those noble lines, which might well be engraven on the memory of the Christian parent—

Maxima debetur puero reverentia. Si quid
Turpe paras, nec tu pueri contempseris annos,
Sed peccaturo obstat tibi filius infans.

He who wastes the period which God has allotted to make a man of him—a period short indeed, as it consists of only a few years, but sufficient for the purpose if rightly improved—wastes what he never can replace. He may deeply regret his folly—he certainly will regret, whether he dies in early manhood or lives to old age; he may weep bitter tears, but, like Esau, he shall "find no place for repentance;" he may labour hard, rising early and eating the bread of carefulness, in order to make up for lost time, but his success, at the best, will be only partial; he has madly thrown away jewels of priceless value, and now their entire recovery is impossible.

Such is the law of our present earthly existence, and in it we see shadowed forth the law of our future and eternal life. Now is the time to prepare

for eternity, and we are urged by every kind of motive that may be supposed to tell upon creatures such as we are, by motives the most animating and alarming, to engage in the work on which hang everlasting things. The season allowed to us for this momentous end, "the day of salvation," is indeed very brief, *so* brief as to be fitly compared to "a hand breadth"—"a watch in the night,"—it is nevertheless amply sufficient for the purpose of making "our calling and election sure." All the means requisite to success have been freely provided and are placed within our reach by Him who commands us to "work out our salvation." The law of life, in the most comprehensive sense of the term, to which man was subjected, when God made him "of the dust of the ground," and stamped upon him His own holy image, has been broken by every child of Adam times without number, and now its awful voice may be heard proclaiming, "cursed is every one who continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them"—"death is the wages of sin"—perish the sinner, perish the whole guilty race of man, rather than that the law they have violated, a law so holy, just, and good, should be dishonoured or annulled. Sooner shall heaven and earth pass away than one jot or tittle of it be changed. But, blessed be God, there is another and still louder voice, its tones sweeter than the sweetest melodies of angels, echoing and re-echoing perpetually even in this world into which sin entered and where death reigns, publishing to all nations, yea offering to every creature, eternal

life as the free gift of God. It is the voice of Him, who though the "brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of his person," came down from heaven, appeared on earth in the likeness of sinful flesh, was made under the law, that he might "magnify it and make it honourable" by his own perfect obedience, and by the shedding of his own precious blood. Now, the preparation which we are required to make, consists in the exercise "of repentance towards God and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ." The first and great command of the Gospel is—"Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved."—"He bore our sins in His own body."—"He died the just for the unjust." The curse which the law denounces against all who break it, He has endured in our room. This atoning work of Jesus in the place of the sinner forms the grand theme of revelation, and hence the very Gospel which unfolds the infinitude of God's love and mercy, at the same time furnishes the universe with a proof the most convincing and appalling, that "He can by no means clear the guilty," in the way of arbitrarily setting aside, or of modifying in any manner the demands of His own righteous law. The very Gospel, which brings life and immortality to light, emphatically proclaims that sin and suffering are conjoined by a law immutable as the eternal throne. My dear hearer, it is surely needless for me to bring arguments to substantiate the charge that you are a sinner against God. Your own conscience confesses it, "your own heart condemns" you. Well,

this word of Him who cannot lie tells you, in terms too plain to be misunderstood, that perish you must, forever, unless saved through the righteousness and atonement of the Son of God. "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but one jot or tittle of the law cannot fail."

Let me, in conclusion, add as a word of warning, that the instrument with which the devil most successfully assails the young and the old, is scepticism in regard to the momentous truth taught in the text. This is his grand temptation and was the weapon with which he gained his dismal triumph over the common mother of our race. "Why not eat of the tree of knowledge," he asked, "that stands in the midst of the garden—its form so beautiful to the sight, its fruit so sweet to the taste?" "I am under a law," replied Eve, "that forbids me to touch it, and it is enforced by the awful penalty of death." "But surely," rejoined the tempter, "you must have misapprehended the meaning of your Maker; it is not to be supposed that He will ever inflict upon you a punishment so dreadful for an offence so trifling." Alas! "She took, she ate, earth felt the wound, and Nature from her seat sighing, gave signs of woe that all was lost."

Precisely so does the same "father of lies" deceive the youth with reference to the connection that subsists between the spring tide and the summer and autumn of our present life. He who is old enough to understand any thing, however inconsiderate of the personal bearing of the truth,

knows perfectly well that he must sow the seed if he would reap the harvest. Reason teaches him the lesson; the revolving seasons ever and anon remind him of it; while the blessed Bible, as often as he reads or listens to it, proclaims it with the majesty and earnestness of a messenger from heaven, yet he is perpetually forgetting it, and living as if the present had not the slightest influence upon the future. I will venture to aver that, among the youth now before me, hardly one could be found who at its entrance into college did not firmly resolve to win for himself the highest honours of the institution; who as he for the first time came in sight of these academic halls did not feel the stirrings of ambition, and whisper, at least to his own heart, the purpose to gain a standing in the highest ranks of scholarship. For a while the resolution tells with excellent effect upon the habits of the student; but ere long something occurs to discourage or divert him from his aim. He yields to the temptation; he loses a little ground; unless he be a young man of rare energy and resolute will he goes more and more behind, though still unwilling perhaps to abandon his early and fond hope. "It is a long time yet before I reach the end of the course," he may say to himself, "something may yet turn up and enable me to make good what I have lost." He knows not, and possibly never learns until it be too late, that he is listening to a syren voice which has lured myriads to ruin, or lulled them into the sleep of death. What, let me ask, would be the use of college life, what the

benefit of college culture, if the habitually indolent and the dissipated, by the spasmodic efforts of a few days or weeks, could reach the same lofty position for which the studious and the good have toiled for years? if, in a word, there was no law that connected success with diligence, thorough scholarship with painstaking study, the complete command of one's powers with elaborate culture, and moral influence with well tried virtue!

And thus it is that Satan misleads and ruins the old and the young for eternity as well as for time. There is a law demanding their obedience; a commandment which "is exceeding broad," reaching to the "thoughts and intents of the heart," as well as the words and actions of the outward man, and regulating all the manifold relations of life. It is enforced by the most fearful penalty, for it declares that the wages of sin is death. Eternal life is suspended upon a full compliance with its demands. And yet there are multitudes who, though they cannot but know from the teachings of God's word, and the working of their own consciences, that they are "condemned already," and are every moment liable to fall into the hands of the living and sin-avenging God, allow themselves to be beguiled into the belief that they shall somehow escape. Eternity, they imagine, is a great way off; there is a long future before them, and though they live in sin, something may turn up to save them from hell. Thus a deceived heart leads them astray, inducing them to act as if they had made a covenant with death; and thus they go on through

life, never dreaming that they are treasuring up unto themselves wrath against the day of judgment, because they will not listen to the warning voice which is perpetually sounding in their ears, "Heaven and earth may pass away, but one jot or tittle of the law shall not fail."

THE WORK OF GOD.

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“Then said they unto Him, What shall we do that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent.”—JOHN vi. 28, 29.

THERE was nothing peculiar in the circumstances under which this question was originally asked and answered; that is, nothing so peculiar as to make it less appropriate in a multitude of other cases. It is one which may be asked at any time and in any place. It is one which is asked, more or less distinctly, more or less earnestly, in every country and in every age. Some ask it listlessly, as if they cared not for an answer. Some ask it with an agonizing eagerness of importunity, as if their life depended on the answer. And between these there are many intermediate gradations. But whether whispered or shouted, shrieked or muttered, whether clothed in language or expressed in act, this question is still asked by men of all conditions and all characters: “What shall we do that we may work the works of God,” *i. e.*, the works which He requires and will accept, as means of reconciliation or as titles to his favour?

There is much implied or presupposed in this momentous question. It assumes the being of a God and one God, and of certain attributes essential to His nature. However false the notions entertained as to some of these, whoever really believes in the existence of a God, must believe that he is just as well as merciful, holy and true as well as almighty and all-wise. The question also takes for granted God's supremacy and sovereign propriety in all his creatures, and their dependence upon him for happiness, as well in this life as in that which is to come. It may also be said, tacitly, to take for granted the existence of some alienation between God and man, and the necessity of something to conciliate the parties. The very asking of the question implies ignorance of what will please God ; and this ignorance implies a state of alienation from Him. For a creature in actual communion with his Maker must know what is due to him and required by him. We cannot conceive of unfallen angels asking, in the sense in which the Jews asked, "What shall we do that we may work the works of God?"

As to all these points, the views of men indefinitely vary in clearness and correctness. And from this variety arises a corresponding difference in the sincerity and earnestness of the inquiry. But, excepting those who are in the lowest stage of ignorance or insensibility, it may be said without extravagance, that all men, everywhere, desire to know, and show by their actions or their words that they desire to know, what

they must do to work the works of God, to gain His favour, to avert His wrath. Why do the worst of men abstain from some forms of iniquity? In obedience to the voice of conscience? Why this voice is but a feeble echo of the voice of God, often so faint, or so confused, as to bear a very slight resemblance to the original authoritative utterance. But where it speaks at all, it speaks of a law and a lawgiver, of a judgment, and of future retribution. And the wicked man, who is deterred by conscience from some sins though not from others, goes just so far in endeavouring to work the works of God, or at least in asking, "What shall I do that I may work the works of God?"

But there are other ways in which the stress of this necessity is much more visibly betrayed than in the mere degrees of restraint or indulgence on the part of sinful men. They not only ask, in word or deed, what they must do to work the works of God, but they actually undertake to work them, according to their various ideas as to what they are, and how they must be wrought. A rapid glance at some of these attempts will throw light on the question of the text, and, at the same time, prepare us for the answer. One man imagines that the works of God are works to be performed by the members of the body, the hands, the knees, the lips; a prayer, a genuflexion, an oblation, in and of themselves, by some intrinsic efficacy of their own, or magical effect wrought by them, he supposes will secure the divine favour and his own salvation. This error certainly prevails most ex-

tensively among the heathen. But it also exists among Mohammedans and Jews, and under the corrupted forms of Christianity, and even in connexion with its purest forms, where outward services, no matter what, are once confounded with the essence of religion. And where the error thus exists, it is of course far more culpable and far more ruinous, than where it nestles in the dark, or gropes its way in twilight. But wherever found, it always tends to one of two results. The man who cherishes it is either blinded to his own destruction, and goes down to death with a lie in his right hand, or he is forced by experience to own, that he has not found what he sought, and to turn away from the externals which have proved so unsatisfying, still saying, as he said at first, but with a sense of want, made more intense by tantalizing disappointment: "What shall I do, that I may work the works of God?"

The next stage which he reaches, and which others more enlightened reach at once, without passing through this preparatory discipline, is that of substituting moral for ceremonial acts. The sinner undertakes to work the works of God by acts of virtue, doing right and doing good, and more especially by practising such acts of virtue as are likely to secure the sympathy of men, and thus confirm his favourable estimate of his own performances, which might otherwise be marred by an unquiet conscience. Hence the constant disposition to make social charities, not only almsgiving, but every other exercise of mutual benevolence,

the supreme if not the sole test of character. Hence the frequency with which we hear of men, who are notoriously guilty of great sins, but who are nevertheless rated, by themselves and others, as a kind of irreligious saints, on account of what is called their goodness of heart, a quality not always incompatible with gross injustice and habitual neglect of the most urgent duties, even towards their neighbours, as well as with a total want of love to God and of obedience to His will. In this delusion thousands live and die. But others are still goaded on by conscience to a fresh discovery that even this is not enough. The applauses of the world cannot prevent their seeing that however good their works may be in one sense, they are wholly insufficient in another; and they therefore come once more with the unsatisfied inquiry on their lips, or in their hearts, and in their looks: "What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?" We have tried to do right and to do good to our neighbours. But we find that even these good works are still imperfect, and that other duties have been utterly neglected, and that sins have been committed, and that all these arrears have been accumulating with a terrible rapidity, so that the good we have attempted shrinks to nothing in comparison with that which we have left undone, and with the positive evil which we have committed. With all this staring us in the face, and stopping up our path, in which direction shall we turn? With this sense of deficiency, even in our best deeds, and this consciousness of positive

transgression, "what shall we do that we may work the works of God?"

The man has now been brought, by a way that he knew not, to the doctrine of atonement, the necessity of expiation, something to satisfy God's justice and to heal the breach of his broken law. With this predominant impression, he may readily infer, that the works of God are works of compensation. He must make good his past failures, and make up for past offences, and by so doing work the works of God at last. But where shall he begin? Perhaps with negative attempts at reformation, by refraining from sins hitherto indulged. The unexpected difficulty here encountered drives him from reformation to repentance. He will weep with unfeigned sorrow over his offences. He will break his own heart with contrition, and move the heart of God with pity, by his penitential grief. But the same imperfection which had marred his reformation still adheres to his repentance. If sin could only be excluded for a moment, he might do it. But the sin that he has reason to repent of is not merely in his life, but in his heart, his very nature, Its action cannot be suspended any more than his existence, by an act of his own will. It will intrude into the pangs of his repentance and pervert them. He can no more break his heart than he can change his life. The one still remains hard, and the other still corrupt. His repentance needs itself to be reformed; his reformation needs itself to be repented of. So far from satisfying God's offended justice for past sins, they are themselves

provocative of that very justice; and the sinner abandoning this effort too, asks, almost in despair: What shall I do, that I may work the works of God.

What has just been described may be regarded as the highest ground that man ever reaches by a light of his own kindling. If he goes beyond this, under the same guidance, he must needs go down. And some accordingly descend from the sincere but vain attempt at reformation and repentance in their own strength, to the lower ground of meritorious abstinence and self-mortification, from repentance to penance, from the humbling of the soul to the humbling of the body, from inward grief to sackcloth and ashes, from vain attempts to abstain from what is evil, to real abstinence from what is not. Because they have not been able to appease God by renouncing sinful pleasures, they will now try to do it by renouncing innocent enjoyments. Because they have tried in vain to do what he commanded, they will now retrieve the failure by doing what is not commanded at all. Here is the secret of that complicated system of will-worship and voluntary humility, which is continually slaying its thousands and its tens of thousands, while a few are driven by it to repeat the question, still unanswered in their own experience: What shall we do that we may work the works of God?

Another descent, quite as great, though in a different direction, leads to a kind of desperate transfer of responsibility. As the sinner cannot work the works of God himself, the church or

the priest shall do it for him. He remains quiescent, and endeavours to be satisfied with his religious privileges or his ecclesiastical connexions. He persuades himself that he is like the cripple at Bethesda, waiting for the troubling of the waters. He cannot do the angel's work ; it is enough if he is there to profit by it. This indolent reliance upon some one else to do what the man himself has tried in vain, is far more common, even in the purest churches, than we may imagine. It is in fact a kind of misplaced faith. The self-renunciation and reliance on another, which it involves, would be effectual if exercised upon the proper object. But when men cease their self-righteous efforts, only to trust in their connexions and advantages, only to think that they are safe because they are within the church and in possession of the gospel, the error is so monstrous and yet so insidious, that nothing but the sovereign grace of God could rouse some, as it does continually, even from this stagnant, nay this petrified condition, to inquire with more solicitude than ever, What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?

There is no need of insisting, or attempting to demonstrate, that these various degrees and forms of error always follow one another in the actual experience of a single person. The connexion pointed out between them may be rather theoretical than practical. It is not, however, for that reason the less real, being founded on the principles of human nature, and the mutual relations both of truth and error. Sometimes, moreover,

the transitions are realized in actual experience. To one man more, to another less, of what has now been described must be confirmed by memory as a part of his own spiritual history. In one or another, or in several, or in all, of the ways enumerated, some of you, my hearers, may have been induced to ask with growing earnestness and importunity: What shall we do that we may work the works of God?

Come then with me to the only oracle, from which a satisfactory response can be expected. Come to Him, to whom the Jews put the same question of old, and receive from Him the same reply. "Then said they unto him: what shall we do that we might work the works of God. Jesus answered and said unto them: this is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." The whole point of this answer lies in the contrast between working and believing. Their minds were full of work. They wanted something to work out for their own salvation. They would probably not have been surprised or startled had he enjoined upon them any task, however difficult, provided that by doing it they might have claimed to work the works of God. To a truly self-righteous spirit, difficulty, danger, pain, are all inducements rather than dissuasives. They enhance the merit and the honour of success, and therefore stimulate the pride of the performer. This has often been exemplified in the extraordinary abstinences, toils, and self-inflicted torments, both of Christian and heathen devotees. And the

same cause might doubtless have produced the same effects upon some of our Lord's contemporaries. Had he required them to scale the heavens or to sound the seas, they might have vainly undertaken it. Had he told them to lacerate their flesh, or to give the fruit of their body for the sin of their souls, they might have obeyed without a murmur, But a requisition to believe, and to believe on him, was something altogether different. The belief required comprehended a belief of his divine legation and authority as well as a belief of his ability and willingness to save. But it likewise comprehended, as inseparable from these, a simple trust in him for personal salvation, and a free and full consent to be saved by him. The complexity sometimes charged upon the Christian doctrine of faith is not greater than exists in any analogous or corresponding case. Tell the drowning man to be of good cheer for you will save him, and you call upon him to perform as many acts as are included in the exercise of saving faith. For in the first place, you invite him to believe the truth of your assertions. In the next place, you invite him to confide in your ability and willingness to save him. In the last place, you invite him to consent to your proposal by renouncing every other hope and agreeing to be saved by you. There is nothing more abstruse or difficult in saving faith. The difference is not in the essential nature of the mental acts and exercises, but in the circumstances under which they are performed.

It was this very simple and implicit trust, how-

ever, that created all the difficulty in the minds of some of Christ's immediate hearers. They had emphatically asked for work, for something to be wrought out by themselves, and in reply he told them to believe, to trust; and that not as something over and above the works which they demanded, but instead of them. He does not say, before or besides the works of God which you demanded, you must believe on me. He says, "This is itself the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent."

The same feeling of surprise and sense of incongruity may be excited now by this reply to the demand in question. In answer to a call for work, no matter how hard, nay the harder the better, to say, trust, believe, may look at first like an evasion or a mockery. And men may even now be slow to understand, and still more slow to credit, this extraordinary substitute for meritorious and laborious work, as a serious proposition, and indeed the only revealed method of salvation. It seems to cast unmerited contempt upon the efforts men have made, or are willing now to make, in their own strength, and as it were, at their own cost and risk. Is all this expenditure of time and labour to be slighted and contemptuously thrown away? Are all these tears and groans and fasts and vigils, all this blood and all this treasure, all this doing and abstaining, all this action and this suffering, to go for nothing? After spending a whole lifetime in thus working out my own salvation for myself, must I be told at last that I have only to believe?

This state of mind may be compared to that of men who have been shut up for years in a dark dungeon, and by incredible exertion, slow and secret toils, have pierced, as they supposed, the massive walls of their prison. The assiduity and constancy, with which such labours may be plied through a long course of years, have often been exemplified in real life. The eagerness with which the opportunity is watched, the ingenious devices to elude suspicion, and the still more ingenious substitutes for ordinary means and instruments, the unwearied patience with which the work has been resumed and even recommenced when interrupted, and the feverish anxiety with which the moment of complete success is supposed to be approaching; all these are familiar facts in the biography of more than one famous captive, as recorded by themselves. But suppose that at one of these critical conjunctures, when the almost superhuman toil of many years seems about to be rewarded by success, a stranger suddenly appears among the disconcerted labourers and commands them to desist and trust in him alone for freedom. It is easy to imagine the suspicion with which such a call would be received, and the demand for evidence, like that made by the Jews on hearing the unexpected words of the text. "They said therefore unto him: What sign showest thou then, that we may see and believe thee? what dost thou work?" And even after their misgiving, in the case which I have been supposing, was allayed by a sufficient attestation, it is easy to imagine that the startled prisoners

might look with some regret upon their implements of labour, and the patient toil of many years, now superseded and made useless. For a moment, we may even go so far as to conceive of some as balancing between the unexpected offer of immediate liberation, and the toilsome method of obtaining it to which they have become accustomed by long habit. But beyond this momentary hesitation, it is inconceivable that any one should go in his rejection of the offered freedom, unless stupefied and maddened by captivity. When the moment of decision comes, we may expect to see them all, without fail and without regret, turning their back upon the toils of many years, and joyfully following their new deliverer to the fresh air and the sunshine of the world without.

In like manner, they who have long been subjected to the bondage of corruption, and have toiled in vain to set themselves at liberty, when first made to hear and understand the declaration, that the saving work which God requires of them is to trust in Jesus Christ whom He has sent, may feel unwilling to abandon their long-cherished plans and methods of self-righteousness. But this reluctance soon subsides, and they address themselves to the consideration of the question, what is meant by calling faith in Christ the work of God, which men must do in order to appease His wrath and conciliate his favour? At first, perhaps, they may imagine, as indeed some have expressly taught, that the act of thus believing is accepted as a meritorious act in lieu of

all the rest, so that he who performs this work is considered as performing all the other "works of God." In this sense some have understood our Saviour's saying: "This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent." That is to say, this act is so acceptable to God, that for the sake of it he will relinquish all his other claims, and reckon you as innocent or righteous. But how can this be reconciled with truth and God's inexorable justice? How can any one act of a sinner, all whose other acts are sinful, be not only free from sin but so peculiarly acceptable to God as to supply the place of perfect and perpetual obedience? If it be said, that faith has no such merit in itself, but God is pleased, in sovereign condescension, so to estimate it and reward it; then the question arises, why even this should be required. For if God can by a sovereign act forgive all men's offences, for the sake of this one deed, he might forgive them without any such condition, and the death of Christ becomes a cruel superfluity. The faith which he describes as the saving "work of God," is faith in Himself as a Saviour and a sacrifice. The meritorious ground of acceptance, therefore, cannot be the act of believing, but must be something in the thing believed. Unless the death of Christ be utterly unmeaning and inefficacious, it is inconceivable that the mere act of believing is a meritorious substitute for all the other acts which might have been demanded of the sinner.

From this over-estimate of human merit in the exercise of faith, men sometimes run into the opposite

extreme, and hold that simple trust or faith in Christ dispenses with all moral obligation. They admit that the sinner has no merit, but deny that he has need of any, either another's or his own, to recommend him to God's favour. The divine mercy to our lost race they consider as consisting in the nullification of the law and its demands. Faith is a saving act, not because of any merit in it, but because it acquiesces in the divine renunciation of all claim upon men's hearts or lives. It is a mere consent to do nothing or to do as they please, and a belief that God will exact nothing of them and expect nothing from them. When Christ says, therefore, "this is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent," it is equivalent to saying, there is no work to be done, and you have only to believe that there is none, in order to be saved. Now all this, I need scarcely say, is utterly at variance with the constant requisition of obedience, even from believers, and the uniform teaching of the Scripture, that "without holiness no man can see the Lord." This last erroneous view is the more dangerous because, irrational as it may seem, it is really a counterfeit or caricature of the true doctrine. It is right in representing faith in Christ, not as a meritorious act supplying all deficiencies, but as a mere reception of God's mercy, offered and exercised in Christ alone. It is only wrong, fatally and ruinously wrong, in representing a the object of their faith a sheer renunciation of God's claims on man's obedience, both in reference to the past and future, so that no atonement is re-

quired for one, and no reform or new obedience for the other. The inevitable tendency of such a doctrine is to "go on in sin that grace may abound." It is the doctrine of those who, as much as in them lies, make Christ the minister of sin; the language of whose hearts and lives is, "let us do evil that good may come;" of whom we may, without a breach of charity, repeat the apostolical anathema, "whose damnation is just." It is surely not of such that we are to learn the meaning of Christ's solemn declaration: "This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent."

The true meaning of the words, in their obvious acceptance, and as interpreted by other Scriptures, may be briefly summed up under two particulars. The first is, that our access to God and restoration to His favour are entirely independent of all merit or obedience upon our part. Neither the act of faith, nor any other act, nor all our acts and abstinences put together, can contribute in the least to our acceptance, as a meritorious ground or a procuring cause. The very impossibility of such a purchase constitutes the absolute necessity of Christ's atoning sacrifice. The three main facts of our condition are, that we are sinners, that our sins must be atoned for, and that we cannot atone for them. To meet this desperate emergency, by doing what was otherwise impossible, God sent his Son to take our place, to obey the law for us, and bear its penalty, incurred by previous transgression. The saving benefit of this great substitution and atonement is freely offered to us in the Gospel. Unreserved accept-

ance of it must of course exclude all reliance upon any merit of our own, and on that supposed to reside in the act of faith as well as every other. Unreserved acceptance of Christ's merit and atonement, to the exclusion of all other, is itself the faith required, and since this is all that we are called upon to do, as the procuring cause of our salvation, that is, simply to rely on Christ, and not upon ourselves or any other creature, it is no wonder that when self-righteous sinners ask Him, "what shall we do, that we may work the works of God?" His answer was, and still is, and still will be, till the day of grace is past forever, "this is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent."

If this view of the matter should still seem to favour antinomian license, such an impression is at once removed by looking at the other particular referred to, as essential to a full disclosure of the doctrine of the Bible upon this momentous subject. It is this, that if God, without denial of himself, could have forgiven sin and saved the sinner, by a sovereign act, without requiring an atonement, then he might have spared, and must have spared, the untold agonies endured by his Son. That these were not spared, is itself a demonstration that atonement was absolutely necessary. And this absolute necessity implies that God's design, in saving man, was not to set aside the law, but to magnify and honour it. And this proof of His purpose, with respect to what is past, is a sufficient index of His will as to the future, a sufficient proof that He does not save men in sin but from sin, and that when be-

lief in Christ is represented as the saving work which God requires, it is not to the exclusion of good works in those who shall be saved, but rather as the source from which they are to flow, the only means by which they can even become possible. Whoever then would "work the works of God," in the most comprehensive sense, must begin by doing this, by believing on his Son, and then the rest may be expected to follow, not as conditions of salvation, which the faith itself has already appropriated and secured, but as the fragrant flowers and delicious fruits of that prolific seed which at the moment of believing was implanted in the heart by the almighty grace of God. To this, to all this, we are called in every invitation of the Gospel. If, with all this in our view, we are disposed to ask, as multitudes have asked before, and as thousands are now asking all around us, "what shall we do, that we may work the works of God?" the same Christ still stands ready to reply to us, as to the Jews of old, "this is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent."

GOD THE GUIDE OF HIS BLIND PEOPLE.

BY

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“I will bring the blind by a way they know not.”—ISAIAH xlii. 16.

TRUE wisdom will confirm the decision of Scripture, not only as to spiritual things, but as to all things, when it says, “If any man thinketh that he knoweth anything,” *i. e.*, if he regard himself as perfect in knowledge, “he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know.” It is only the ignorant man who can feel that he knows everything. And the more truly well-informed an individual becomes, the more ready is he to confess, not only that he does not, but also that he cannot know much. Even as to external objects, things which fall under the cognizance of the senses, it cannot be said that we perfectly know them. The veriest child may ask questions about a straw or a clod of earth, which the wisest philosopher would be unable to answer. The question, what is matter? or gravitation? or light? or heat? or time? or space? cannot be answered. We know many things about their appearances and laws, but what they are, no man can tell. In every blade of grass, and breath

of air, in the formation of our own bodies, in the nature of the animal life which we possess, in all things around us and within us, there are mysteries—things yet unlearned by man. If we look forth upon the universe of God, the little circle of light by which we are surrounded, is perceived to be itself surrounded by an illimitable circumference of darkness. The most powerful optic-glass helps not so much to perfect our knowledge, as to reveal to us the vastness of our ignorance. Hence, Sir Isaac Newton, who astonished the civilized world by his discoveries, and whose name stands among the brightest and most imperishable upon the annals of all human science, declared, when far in the decline of life, that “he seemed to himself to have been like a child, picking here and there a pebble on the shore, while the vast ocean of truth yet lay undiscovered before him.”

If we pass from material to spiritual objects, we are yet more emphatically ignorant and blind. Leave out of view the teachings of God’s word, and what do we know of the spiritual world? Can we tell what orders of intelligences dwell there? or what may be the mode of their existence? or what their moral character? or what connection they may have with us, and what influence over us? We must resort not to the poet, but to the inspired writer to ascertain the fact that

Millions of spiritual beings walk the earth
Unseen, both when we sleep, and when we wake.

We are surrounded by principalities, and powers,

and ministering spirits, who are ever active, for weal or woe, in influencing our conduct, in guiding our steps, in aiding to fix our everlasting destinies. Man does not probably so much influence man; the friends and relatives and business associates, by whom you are each surrounded from day to day, do not probably exercise so much influence over your present conduct and everlasting destiny as unseen intelligences, good and bad, are doing. Yet what do we know of them, save what the Bible tells us? Nothing—absolutely nothing. We walk amidst these spiritual beings as men walk amidst their fellow-men, when in total darkness or in blindness. We see them not—we know them not.

If we look to our own path or progress in life, (and it is this fact more especially which is assumed in our text,) we find ourselves not at all better informed concerning that which lies before us. We walk forward in the path of life, as men walk who grope their way in a strange road, step by step, in total blindness. We have no faculty of the mind by which we can penetrate the future, as memory can penetrate the past. There is a thick curtain hung across our course, so thick that the most penetrating gaze can never pierce it, nor the most sagacious contrivance ever rend it; a curtain which recedes before us as we advance, but only step by step, yet revealing to us at each advance, things most unexpected, often most undesired, frequently most startling in their nature. All human wisdom has never yet devised a way to ascertain what a single day or hour may bring forth. Men have

earnestly longed to know the future, and have tried to know it, but without success. The extent to which astrology and fortune-telling and similar impositions have been patronised in every age, shows how eagerly men would know, if they could, what lies before them. But auguries, and omens, and oracles, and every kindred device, however ingeniously contrived, and with whatever skill practised, have failed to draw aside the veil which hides futurity from sight.

With what truthfulness therefore do the words of our text—with what truthfulness does the word of God everywhere, represent men—especially in their natural state—as blind; as persons who cannot see before them the path in which they walk, but who are also walking in a new and strange path; a path with which no information to be acquired from others can render them familiar.

Now, this view of our situation may seem dark and gloomy. But admitting it to be so, is it *less true*, because dark and gloomy? We admit that it is to him who is forgetful of his God and unreconciled to Him, an awe-inspiring glimpse of his present situation. And we would that every forgetter of God in this assembly might feel it to be so. How know you, O man, O woman, whose pursuits, and plans, and pleasures all have reference to this life, and who art either carelessly or confidently trusting to unaided human wisdom—how know you that you may not be wandering even now in the by-paths of error and delusion to the ruin of your soul? How know you that some awful precipice

may not be near at hand across the very path in which you tread? How know you that your foot may not be pressing even now the brink, so that a single step may plunge you into the bottomless pit? You cannot know it. You are not sure that this very day may not bring forth your everlasting ruin.

But the word of God does not more explicitly reveal to us our ignorance and blindness, than it offers to us a great and infallible guide. "*I* will bring the blind by a way that they know not," says Jehovah himself. It is a promise, made, as the previous context shows, with a reference to the Saviour's coming and His work. It is a promise made to the children of God, in their natural state, as blind and ignorant as others, and exposed to the same dangers. *They* should be led in a way that they knew not. Their course should be one that was not of their own choosing. And it was to be a course at every stage and turn unexpected and surprising.

Let our minds be now directed then to the inquiry, whether or no this promise is verified in the experience of God's people. Can we perceive in the way by which they are led along, anything so new and unexpected—so without or even so contrary to their own plans and anticipations that we may believe there is a superhuman wisdom planning for them, and a hand of infinite power leading them along?

I. In answer to this question we first reply, that

such a guidance may be traced in the dealings of God with His children *by His providence*.

A recent historian of the Reformation has placed in the forefront of his immortal work this sentence respecting it. "This history takes as its guiding-star the simple and pregnant truth that *God is in history*."* And that single sentence contains a world of important truth. Other historians have sought to make their books valuable and valued by means of accurate and learned statements; by picturesqueness and beauty of description; by deep and philosophical reflections, but almost without exception they have forgotten this cardinal truth, that the hand of God has wrought in all the affairs of men. They have described the rise and fall of nations; the changes, progress, and convulsions of the nations of the earth; but amidst the establishment and overthrow of thrones, the intrigues of politicians and the clang of arms, they have forgotten the chief, even the first cause of all—God, "working all things according to the counsel of His own will." And no little share of our forgetfulness of God may be attributed to that silent lie of all our histories, which has kept out of view the important fact, that "God is not far from every one of us."

The recorded history of the Jewish nation affords a beautiful illustration of the truth, that God is active in all human affairs. Had that history been for the first time written out by an uninspired hand, it had no doubt differed little from other histories. We should have had a minute, and perhaps, as to

* D'Aubigne's Hist. of the Reformation, preface.

outward things, an accurate account of the Jewish origin in Abraham, and thence down to the Redeemer's time, with all the long series of outward changes, while the presence and power of God had been almost unseen and unthought of, and the various wonderful turns in their affairs been, as far as possible, ascribed to, and explained by, merely natural causes. But God became Himself the author of that history. The Holy Ghost enabled holy men to perceive and to record *the truth*. And hence, in every event of Jewish history, we see the hand of God, not only in its miraculous, but in its most ordinary occurrences. The veil was drawn aside, and the cause of this thing and of that thing was seen in the Divine Mind, as well as in nature and in man. And had God inspired another prophet to write the history of any other nation, yea, had God inspired a prophet to write your individual history, my hearer, or my own, I doubt not we should be startled and astonished to see how busy the hand of God had been in its every stage and turn. I know we should be made to feel as we have never felt, that if there is less of miracle, there is no less of Providence around us now, than was around the Jews in the days of their theocracy.

And yet, blinded as our understandings are by sin, and heedless as we are of the hand of God while it works, we can often clearly see the traces of that hand when its work is done. However tame and commonplace his course of life, I venture to assert, that there is not one among my audience

who can sit down in still retirement, and take a careful and candid retrospect through adult years back to the scenes of childhood's early days, who will not feel the calm conviction steal in upon his soul, that there has been an unseen hand leading him in paths that he knew not. The assertion of the poet finds a response, not only in our experience, but also in the very depths of our dependent nature, when he says,

There's a divinity which shapes our ends,
Rough-hew them how we will.

This same sentiment was uttered only in other words by a more infallible poet and philosopher when he said long before, "The heart of a man deviseth his way, but the Lord directeth his steps." Did you ever try the experiment of taking such a calm and careful retrospect? If not, no wonder if the doctrine of a special Providence has taken little hold upon your mind and heart. Try, I beseech you, the profitable experiment, and see if you be not convinced. Tear yourself away from the busy world which now crowds upon your thoughts, and from the relations which now bind you to the present, and flee back to the sunny days of childhood. Surround yourself again with the smiles of those whom you then loved, and on whom you then leaned for happiness. Call back the gladsome, buoyant spirit which then dwelt within your bosom. Bid memory again paint upon the canvas of your soul the sunlit landscape of the future. Bid her re-colour the faded and almost forgotten visions

of future enjoyment. Bid her delineate afresh the erased and neglected plans for future usefulness, success, and happiness. And then, when you have done well and carefully all this, go forward and re-tread the path of life, carrying with you those recovered plans and pictures of the future, and at each step compare the anticipation or resolve with the reality. And how do they agree? Ah how? You meant to do so and so. Did you do it? You meant to be so and so. Did you fulfil your design? Did you even always alter your designs voluntarily as you went forward? Although ignorant of your history, I answer for you—you did not. You found unforeseen circumstances arising all along the way to alter your determinations and to change your course. Now some seeming accident occurred, perhaps the veriest offspring of a moment, to mar your plan. Here some unexpected reverse of fortune overtook you, which with all your wisdom and exertions you could not avert. There some bereavement snatched away a relative or friend, whose departure dashed many a fond hope, and threw many a well-laid scheme into confusion. And how many parts of life, unpainted in your youthful picture, have you not encountered! Passions have been stirred up which you never meant should have a place within your bosom. Trials and troubles and temptations have occurred, the nature and perhaps the very existence of which you knew not of when you started on your journey. Friends whom you deemed true as truth itself, have forgotten you, perchance have become your enemies.

Sickness has laid you upon beds of languishing, and brought you to the brink of eternity, or perhaps has more permanently benumbed your susceptibilities for enjoyment. And so by a thousand unforeseen incidents, you have been led by a way that you knew not, and reached to-day a position, both as to inward character and outward relations to the world, which it was no part of your original plan to reach. Is it not so? And now as you contrast your present self with your former picture of your then future self, does not either this or that, as the case may be, seem to be a caricature and mockery of the other? And now why is this? Why have you been unable to walk in that path which you marked out for yourself? Why in spite of your utmost exertions to go in it, have your feet been turned aside? How happens it that you have been often diverted when you were unwittingly just entering some labyrinth of trouble, or about to step blindly off some precipice of guilt and ruin? How is it that you have been so often protected from yourself, and thwarted for your good? Ah! it is because you have had an unseen guide. And although you perhaps felt not his gentle grasp which was laid upon you, and acknowledged not his goodness, he has not left you to walk alone a single step, or to chose your own path when He saw it would not be for your advantage. He has brought you in your blindness by a way that you knew not. And just as really as he led his ancient Israel, day by day, by a pillar of fire and of cloud, just so really is he now leading by his own presence,

every one of his own dear children towards the heavenly Canaan. And although he may lead them through the depths of the sea, or the rugged desert, by blessings and by chastisements, He will by his providence be with them still, until they reach the journey's end, for his promise is "I will *never* leave thee nor forsake thee."

II. But we are far from having yet reached the full meaning of this text, which we must regard, from its close connection with the previous prophecy concerning Christ, as having reference yet more to the leadings of God's *Spirit* than of his providence. I proceed, then, to remark yet more emphatically, that God leads his children by a way they know not *in the dealings of his grace*. He, by his grace, lays hold upon them at a time when they do not expect him, and in a way in which they look not for him; and from that moment, until they reach their heavenly destination, their progress in the paths of righteousness is, at every step, new, strange, and surprising to themselves. Let us briefly see if it be not so.

When God by his Spirit comes to apply unto the soul the redemption that is in Christ, he first of all produces in the soul *a persuasion and perception of its own guilt and wretchedness*; and this conviction God causes to lay hold upon the soul, usually *at a time* as unlikely, as he does in ways wonderfully various. Behold the woman of Samaria! She goes forth from her household as usual, to fill her vessel with water at the well of Jacob; she finds a tired stranger sitting on the well, and

perceives him to be of the hated nation of the Jews; she enters into a brief conversation with him, and soon stands conscience-stricken and self-condemned before the acknowledged Messiah. Behold the assembly which stood before the Apostle Peter on the day of Pentecost! There are men out of every nation under heaven, who have come up to Jerusalem, not to find salvation, but for purposes of trade and ceremonial worship. There, too, stand the men of Judea, who have just now taken and with wicked hands have crucified and slain the Lord of glory, their hearts and hands yet reeking with the Redeemer's blood. They have just reached the climax of human guilt. Yet, strange to tell, there they stand, convinced of sin, and crying—"Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Behold the thief upon the cross! Regardless alike of the claims of God and of humanity, his crimes have brought him near to death. Even amidst the agonies of crucifixion, the two thieves at first both railed on Jesus; but soon the one is heard rebuking his companion, saying, "Dost thou not fear God?" while he turns his supplicating cry to Jesus, "Lord, remember me." Behold the blaspheming, persecuting Saul! With an exceeding madness in his heart against the saints of God, breathing forth threatenings and slaughter,—with the commission of the high priest for their destruction on his person, a light shines around him, a voice from heaven smites upon his ear, and the bloody persecutor humbly, tremblingly inquires, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Behold the jailer at Phi-

lippi! He retires to his rest as unconcerned about his soul as usual, but at midnight he is heard crying in alarm, "What must I do to be saved?" John Newton became convinced of sin while in a slave-ship, and engaged in a course of gross and shocking licentiousness. A late and celebrated clergyman of England was pierced by his first convictions of sin by hearing from the minister who occupied the pulpit the simple words, "Let us pray." Two students in one of our colleges, while a revival was in progress, some years ago, mutually agreed to attend an inquiring meeting, that they might amuse themselves by practising deception upon the officiating clergyman. When the meeting was called to prayer, they kneeled among the rest, and, while upon their knees, they were both smitten by the power of the Spirit. Thus, "fools who came to scoff, remained to pray;" and so unexpectedly found salvation in the cross of Christ.

And it is ever so. God is characteristically a God who is found of them that sought Him not. Often does he meet the criminal in his dungeon cell, and reclaim him to himself. Often does he meet the licentious man in the midst of his licentiousness: sometimes the dying sinner, as he did the thief upon the cross, when all hope seems preposterous. Not seldom does he bring the sinner to repentance when he has just reached a point, where he is more than ever surrounded by manifold and strong temptations: when he had perhaps long disregarded affectionate parental prayers and admonitions, the warnings of a preached Gospel, the striv-

ings of the Holy Spirit: when he had begun to indulge in new species of iniquity: when he was peculiarly exposed to evil influences or companions: when in short his case seemed more than ever hopeless. When Satan had shielded his bosom most carefully with some choice and adamant breastplate from the armory of hell, then did the king make sharp his arrows to pierce it through and through, and reach the heart beyond. Thus, generally, (may I not say always?) does God magnify the power of his grace.

As to the *nature* no less than the occasion of *these convictions*, God works in unexpected ways. Men often think that conviction of sin is little more than to know that one is a sinner. Hence they often expect that when a suitable time, a convenient season, shall have come, it will be sufficient just to read and meditate upon this fact, that they are sinners. And he, who once entertained this thought, but has since become a child of God, has probably been taken by surprise when the Spirit opened the eyes of his understanding. He was astonished to find how stony, how unyielding, how unfeeling a heart he carried in his bosom. He was astonished to find, how averse he was from God, and how depraved he is in all his nature. He is amazed to see how things before regarded as innocent, have become vile; how the favorite sins which he hugged to his bosom have become serpents and scorpions which he cannot get rid of: how the carnal nature which he before delighted to gratify, (so far at least as outward appearances and the

good opinion of those around him would allow) is now transformed into a putrid carcase—a body of death—from which he longs and strives to be set free.

The same remark also applies to *the means* which God employs to arrest his children in their thoughtless way. They perhaps expected to go up the slope of Calvary by some path of their own choosing, but how has God disappointed them? They were intending perhaps when a convenient time had come, to seek salvation leisurely and gently, as a mere matter of self-interest. But, lo! the Spirit of God came down upon them like a rushing mighty wind, in which the soul, like some tall forest tree, was swayed and bowed before the blast as if its destruction were at hand. While God was effecting the transformation of the old creature into the new, all its powers seemed convulsed by the greatness of the change. Or, more probably the sinner then impenitent, was looking for some mighty exertion of God's power; waiting for, and desirous of some powerful revival in the community, or some indubitable, heart-breaking sense of guilt laid upon himself. He felt that until God almost struck him to the earth by the thunderings and lightnings of the law, he could not be in God's path towards heaven. And how did God disappoint him also. The power of the Spirit descended upon him like the gentle shower, or the evening dew. Some striking providence; some simple truth repeated in his hearing for the thousandth time; some whispered admonition of a Christian friend;

some long-known text of holy scripture; awakes attention, decides for action, bows down the soul gently, yet with true convictions, before God. God has led the sinner to conviction by a way that he knew not.

The same is eminently true of *the apprehension and acceptance of Jesus Christ: the act of faith*. It is wonderful how defective, how distorted, how every way wrong, are men's views of Jesus Christ previous to the experience of faith. They may have learned the whole orthodoxy of the subject. Yet there are some things here which the natural man cannot discern. There seems to be a veil—a dark and terrible veil—drawn before the eyes of men, which shuts out the sight of Christ as “the way, the truth, and the life.” This strange, this universal blindness of men to Christ, and to his relation to our salvation, meets us at every turn in the endeavour to lead souls to Heaven, and their inability to comprehend the grand and spirit-stirring message of salvation when set before them in the clearest terms, can only be explained by recurring to the Apostolic declaration—“In whom the god of this world hath blinded the eyes of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.” When God saves a sinner, this dark and terrible veil is torn from his eyes by the power of the Holy Ghost, and to the soul's recovered vision is presented “Christ, the image of God,” in all his divine fullness, in all the completeness of his offices, in all the freeness of his offers. He becomes

its wisdom, its righteousness, its sanctification, its redemption. The soul now bows down before him, leans upon him, clings to him, takes him as its all in all. He who was just now "without form or comeliness," has become "the one altogether lovely." And now as the soul looks back upon its by-gone times of ignorance, it is filled with astonishment and humiliation because it never *thus* saw Christ before,—so free, so simple, so beautiful, so perfect does his salvation now appear. The believing soul feels and is ready to confess that in revealing to it such a sight; in giving to it such a trust, God has been leading it in ways which it knew not.

The divine methods for leading the believer to growth in grace are not less unexpected. When the new-born child of God looks forth upon the path of holiness, into which his feet are, by grace, just turned, it seems to him to lie, throughout its whole extent, across green pastures and beside still waters, and, with the most sanguine and pleasing anticipations, he presses on. He sees not the difficulties of the way, and is, therefore, almost ready to chide others for their tardy pace, while he forms high resolutions for himself. He will never lag, let others do what they may. But he has not gone far before he finds that even here he cannot walk in the way of his own choosing. Perhaps he has begun with too much self-confidence, or too much pride, and it is best he should be humbled. Hence, he has not gone far before his feet are found in a more rugged and more toilsome path. Temptations

are around him, and sometimes he falls beneath their power. Unexpected hindrances arise on this side and on that, until he finds, at length, that his own strength is perfect weakness. Perhaps he is in prosperity, and he is found yielding to self-applause, to self-indulgence, or to avarice. Perhaps he is in adversity, and he yields to despondency, to repinings, to distrust God. Beloved objects of affection are spared, and he idolizes them. They are torn away, and he murmurs at his Father's act. Without are fightings and within are fears. Yet he trusts in God. He presses onward. He prays day by day for growth in grace. Who that lives a life of faith cannot appreciate the language of that touching hymn?—

*I hop'd that in some favour'd hour,
At once he'd grant me my request,
And by his love's constraining pow'r
Subdue my sins and give me rest.*

*Instead of this, he made me feel
The hidden evils of my heart ;
And let the angry powers of hell
Assault my soul in every part.*

*Yea, more ; with his own hand he seem'd
Intent to aggravate my woe ;
Cross'd all the fair designs I schem'd,
Blasted my gourds, and laid me low.*

*"Lord, why is this?" I trembling cried,
"Wilt thou pursue thy worm to death?"
"'Tis in this way," the Lord replied,
"I answer pray'r for grace and faith."*

And is such the experience of the young convert who started but yesterday upon the road heavenward, full of ardent hopes and high resolves? Yes. God has put the gold in the furnace. He is tearing loose the roots of the tree, that he may finally transplant it to a better soil. He is guiding his child by a more rugged road, because his eye sees dangers in the path of uninterrupted progress and enjoyment, even in spiritual things. And he will continue, even to the end of life, thus to bring the blind by a way they knew not.

Still further; even *on the believer's death-bed* is often and gloriously illustrated the teaching of our text. See there a believer who has been all his lifetime in bondage, through fear of death. Every sign of its approach has filled him with alarm, and the knowledge that he himself must sometime pass through that dread change has filled his soul with trembling. And now his time has come. The silver cord will soon be loosed, and the golden bowl be broken. Flesh and heart already begin to fail him. But, lo! to his surprise, his soul is calm. The destroyer has lost all his terrors. The everlasting arms are underneath him, and he joyfully exclaims, "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me!"

There is another believer whose countenance was always sad. It was not so much that he feared the King of Terrors, but he doubted his interest in Christ. He feared to appropriate unto himself the

precious promises and consolations of the gospel lest he should be a self-deceiver. He feared to utter a clear testimony on the side of Christ, lest he should be uttering heartless words. Now he, too, must enter that dark valley. And how can he, who always feared while in life and health, be otherwise than in despair in this his day of awful trial? But look! how serene and cheerful is his aspect! The dark clouds are now all cleared away. The Sun of Righteousness is pouring its effulgence full upon him. And, as he disappears from mortal sight, his last shout, clear and joyful, rings in our ears: "I know that my Redeemer liveth! O, death! where is thy sting? O, grave! where is thy victory?" God leads his people, in the hour of death, by a way that they knew not.

I will only add, that as the path by which God leads his people is in its beginning, and in all its progress, so is it in its *termination*—one which they know not. Our heavenly destiny is veiled from mortal sight. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be." The believer's has all along been a surprising course; but here, my brethren, will be the great surprise of all, when he bursts away from his habiliments of flesh, and the remaining bonds of sin, and finds himself in the abodes of glory. What new, what strange, what ecstatic sensations will then rush in upon him! What yet untasted sources of enjoyment will then be open to him! What vast discoveries of wisdom, and of power, and of grace, as yet unguessed at, will he make! What seraphic raptures, what holy companionships, what a blessed

eternity will be his! Refine the joys of earth as you may—exert your imaginations to the utmost—you have not yet conceived adequately of the joys and glories of that heavenly home towards which God by his grace is daily leading each and every one of his dear children. And when the first tumult of that great surprise shall have subsided, it will be one occupation of that eternity of bliss, to look back along the way by which the Lord your God has led you, and to trace his goodness, his wisdom, and his power in its every step. And then and there, as you review his dealings with you, in the pure light of heaven, you will see cause to praise him for ever and for ever more, that he gave you not the choice of your own path, but led you, in your blindness, by a path which else you had never known.

Accept, then, I beseech you, Christian brethren, the joy and strength these words are suited and intended to afford you. Believe that your Heavenly Father is continually at your side, and choosing all your paths. Commit your way into his keeping. Trust to his wisdom in all you perplexities and straits. Lean on his powerful arm in all your weakness; rely upon his firm promise that he never will forsake you. Be submissive and reconciled to his will in all things. Cast your eyes forward from his present dealings to their glorious issues; and be ever careful to testify your gratitude by your obedience and by your praise.

CHRIST, THE MANIFESTATION OF GOD.

BY

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God was manifest in the flesh.—1 TIM. iii. 16.

THERE was a deep truth conveyed by that inscription read by Paul, upon an Athenian altar, "To the unknown God." God is the great unknown; not only because there are depths in his nature which we cannot fathom, because his is an immensity which the utmost reaches of intellect fail to grasp; a duration which man knows not how to measure; an omnipotence which baffles all attempt at conception; and because such is the infinitude of every one of the divine perfections, that after exhausting all our strength in the intense pursuit, and rising to the dizziest heights, and pressing to the remotest verge of thought, we come back from the contemplation of the Godhead, astounded by the vastness, a trifling part of which only we have been able to see, and able but to articulate the humiliating question, Who by searching can find out God? In saying that God is unknown, we mean now not to speak of him as incomprehensible, as one whose nature never can be perfectly understood by finite capacities, even when he has been revealed to

them with all possible clearness ; but we mean to speak of him as undiscoverable in any measure however imperfect, or to any extent however limited, unless as he reveals himself. It is not the impossibility of man fully comprehending the glorious nature of God, exploring to its utmost boundaries a field which is so absolutely limitless, and taking in with his finite capacities the full sweep of a subject which is infinite ; but the impossibility to which we now have reference, is that of attaining to any knowledge even the least and most inadequate of the Divine Being, except as he furnishes it to us. We have no faculty by which to obtain an immediate perception of the Great Supreme. He is not far from every one of us. He fills all that is around, above, beneath us ; and yet the eye cannot see God, with our hands we cannot feel him, the ear catches no sound of his footsteps. He is covered with an impenetrable veil ; and though he is ever with us, ever beholding us, though it is He that supports every faculty of our natures, holds every fibre of our frames, guides every motion of our bodies, directs every pulsation of our hearts, superintends every exercise of our minds, yet we cannot behold him any more than if all the space which he fills were void unconscious emptiness. And though we had the faculties of angels, or with a vision supernaturally assisted, like that of Elisha's servant, we were able to see the celestial visitants that throng our world, or to see the human soul as it forsakes its tenement of clay for its upward or its downward flight, still though able to discern created

spirits, we would not be able to penetrate the thick darkness in which He dwells enshrouded. It is not within the reach of any creature-faculty to uncover the awful mystery of His nature, nor to look direct upon the essence of the Godhead. The King eternal, immortal, invisible, is by all unseen; and in his existence, his perfections, his purposes, he is to all beings a profound secret, except as he voluntarily discloses himself to them.

With what angels may know of God, or with what devils may know of God, we are not now particularly concerned. We shall not undertake to inquire how far his glory and his grace are made known to the one, or what are the methods by which they are conveyed; nor to what extent the others learn to know him, whose just vengeance has lighted the fires of their torment. The text speaks of a manifestation of God to man. Man was not created to eat, and drink, and die; to pass his earthly existence absorbed in carnal pursuits, and earthly cares, and transitory pleasures. He was made to have communion with God, to serve him, to contribute to his glory. But a God unknown and unrevealed cannot be worshipped nor obeyed. He may awaken a sort of mysterious dread, such as silence and night inspire; but he can neither be praised, adored, nor loved. Jehovah has therefore made himself known to men. Our text tells us '*God was manifest in the flesh.*'

I do not feel it necessary to prove to you now that this actually took place at the incarnation of Jesus Christ. It is as plain as it can be upon the

face of the passage, that this is the event to which the sacred writer refers. I shall not go into any labored criticism to prove to you that this verse stands uncorrupted as it came from the pen of Paul. I shall not detail to you the various ways by which men have sought to evade its plain testimony to the Deity of Jesus. I shall not cull arguments from the rest of Scripture, by which the doctrine of this passage may be corroborated. I may presume that so elementary a truth of our religion as the union of Deity and manhood in the person of Jesus, is understood and embraced. Or if there be among my hearers any who have doubts upon so fundamental a point, I shall just leave my text to stand out before them in its own simple majesty, and with all the positiveness of its declaration, 'God was manifest in the flesh.' I shall not mar the effect of this utterance of the oracles of truth, by presuming that it needs to be substantiated, which God has delivered, or that it can gather confirmation from argument which He has declared. I bring no other witness. I present no farther demonstration. I give you this one statement to which God's spirit has set his seal: and I do not ask, I demand your belief.

I assume then, as undisputed, what my text declares; or if any dispute it they must contend with their Maker, not with me. That which we design at present is to occupy you with a few thoughts directed to the illustration of the fulness of meaning contained in the inspired expression before us. Our aim shall be simply to educe the idea, which is pre-

sented to the mind when it is said, God was manifest in the flesh; we wish, in other words, to consider the incarnation as a manifestation of God. And if we confine ourselves to this single truth, since it is alone presented in our text, we shall not, we trust, be considered as either denying or underrating the other ends of the incarnation, because it does not fall within the range which we propose to ourselves to speak of them. It is, we gratefully acknowledge, by the incarnation of the Son of God alone, that we are provided with a competent mediator between God and man. It was thus alone that an adequate atonement could be made for human sin. It is by the incarnation that we have set before us our only perfect example; by it that we are permitted to indulge that confidence in our divine Redeemer, as one who can sympathize with us in trials which he has himself experienced. But while we would not forget, and mean not to undervalue these and other inestimable benefits which we owe to the incarnation of the Son of God, we wish now to abstract your minds from every other advantage it confers, and fasten your attention upon the single one presented in the text, which is itself enough to make us adore this sacred mystery and devoutly prize it as of inestimable worth. If the incarnation were nothing more to us than a manifestation of God; if it gave us no mediator, brought us no atonement, set before us no example, provided us no compassionate High Priest, but merely brought God down to us, and enabled us to look, still with adoring awe, and yet with admiring

confidence upon him, and to gain fresh and enlarged views of his nature and glory, still this mystery of godliness would have deserved our wonder, and we should have pointed you to it as to a thing second in importance to nothing that we can imagine. And though it is not for us to limit the wisdom and grace of God, nor to say what he might have done, or what he might not have done under other circumstances, yet it does appear as though we would be almost warranted in saying, not only that the incarnation shines with a lustre far superior to every other communication God has made of himself to our race, but that it is superior to any other which could have been devised for making himself known. It does appear as though God, whose it is to bring good out of evil, and to make the wrath of man to praise him, had made the guilty trespass of man which needed the incarnation in order to its atonement, the occasion of bringing himself nearer to his creatures, and laying himself more open to their astonished and admiring gaze, than he could have done, had not that which he abhors presented the occasion. It is ours, then, at this time to contemplate this master-stroke of divine wisdom, and to see how completely the enemy was made to overreach himself; and how that which was done out of no desire to promote the divine glory, and from no regard for human welfare, but out of hostility both to God and man, was nevertheless made in this case, as in so many others, to turn in favour of both, so that to God there is gathered a more ample harvest of glory,

and to man is afforded the opportunity, as we cannot but think, of a fuller acquaintance with his Maker, and a more intimate communion with him, than though sin had not entered, and the putting of it away required that God should become manifest in the flesh.

We mean not to imply, of course, that God was wholly unknown in the world before the incarnation, and that no other way existed or was possible than this, of arriving at a knowledge of his existence and attributes. We do not say that the incarnation stands alone as the sole method by which God can reveal himself to his creatures; it does stand alone as the only case in which God was manifested, personally exhibited to men; and its glory consists in the fact, that while there were many successive modes of divine communication, rising one above the other in fulness and clearness, this towers loftily above them all, surpassing stage after stage of revelation, to each of which, had we known only that, we should have ascribed perfection.

There is a light in nature which reveals God, and there are lessons respecting him spread out before the eyes of all men. The invisible things of God are clearly seen from the creation of the world; his eternal power and Godhead are distinctly written there; and, as if to make the testimony of nature full, and to the last degree complete, man himself was made in the image, after the likeness of God; so that to know his Creator, all that he had to do was to turn inward and look upon himself, and trace the lineaments of his Maker there.

We may not pause here; but if we could stop and gaze about us, and gaze inward, and see how the knowledge of God streams in upon us from ten thousand sources, and then think how much more the pure eye of unfallen man could have read where we see nothing, and how the image of God impressed upon the heart, now so blurred and defaced, was then distinctly traceable in every feature, we would almost be prepared to say, if we knew of no further communications God had made, Surely this is the most ample, the most certain, the most direct instruction concerning an invisible, incomprehensible Creator that can possibly be imagined. To write his name and his attributes on everything about us, on all that lives and moves; yea, on every leaf and flower, and fleecy cloud, and babbling brook, and ray of light and drop of dew; and then to grave his very image on the soul of man itself! how can God be forgotten or unknown in such a world, by such a soul?

But revelation has surpassed nature. We speak not now of its meeting those new necessities which the apostasy has introduced, and for which nature has not the semblance of a remedy; but of this one particular, which is now before us—the making known of God. We cannot here delay to tell of the teachings of the Scriptures, and to unfold what they with all plainness of speech declare, respecting the existence, the perfections, and the purposes of Jehovah, and to show you what a flood of light direct from heaven itself is here, above all the light that nature had, and all that nature taught. We

might do this in a manner which would make you feel that here was an immense advance, not only upon what man in the blindness and the degradation of his present state knows without a revelation, but upon all that in the uprightness of his original condition he could have known without it. The race was kept in pupilage for centuries; teacher after teacher was sent, inspired from above, to train the world in divine knowledge; lesson after lesson was given fresh from heaven; and, as if words alone could not sufficiently convey ideas of celestial objects, a complete system of symbolic representation was introduced, after the shadow and example of heavenly things; holy places were made, by a celestial pattern, as figures of the true; and thus invisible things were embodied and made visible and tangible. Prophet and priest fulfilled each their course to teach the people knowledge; psalmists added their heaven-born strains; the Spirit of God, himself the author of these various lessons, taught them to the heart illumined by his grace. And here, again, if we knew not, from the actual fact, what was yet in reserve, we might be ready to ask what farther could be added to these teachings, so abundant, so comprehensive and so explicit of the Word of God, to make Jehovah better known?

And yet, though the language of inspired communication may leave nothing untold which words can convey, and nothing farther to be desired, nothing even possible, in the way of description of the nature and perfections of the Most High; still it would introduce us to a nearer acquaintance with

this dread Being if, instead of merely distantly hearing about him, we should be made witnesses of his acts, and be permitted to gaze direct upon positive exhibitions of those attributes of power, and justice, and grace, of which we had been told. Here is another advance in the presentation of the knowledge of God. Neither can we dilate upon this, but only refer you in the general to those immediate workings of his miraculous power, by which he has, again and again, accomplished his designs of mercy and of justice. Thus, the fearful overthrow of Sodom, the plagues sent on hardened Pharaoh, the judgments on murmuring Israel, speak more impressively than any language, the holiness, the justice, and the dreadful vengeance of our God. So the various interpositions of God on behalf of his people, for their deliverance from danger and for their rescue from their foes, the magnificence of his descent on Sinai, the food he vouchsafed them in the desert, the guidance of the pillar of cloud and of fire, give a more vivid conception of God, and let us more into the beatings of his gracious heart, and show us more of the glory of his nature than any words could express.

And now one might, with strong appearance of reason, conclude that the various modes of revealing God must be complete, and that nothing more can be imagined to be added to those already recited. The existence and the perfections of God are written upon every fragment of creation; his very image is impressed upon the soul of man; his nature and attributes are fully and explicitly taught

in his Word; they are clearly displayed in the acts of power, and mercy, and judgment, done by him amongst men. Possessed of these, we would have said that no new plan could be devised to add anything to the completeness of those already in existence; and that, if any accession were to be made to the knowledge we possess respecting God, it must come, not in some new form of communication, but by enlarging the channel of the old; it must be by God's making an increased display of himself in his works of creation and providence, or enabling us to see with greater distinctness what is already written there; or by rendering his image on man's heart more distinct and perfect; or by adding some new revelation regarding himself to his inspired word; or by some yet unheard-of, immediate, and supernatural exhibition of his attributes. And still the wisdom of God has shown us that it was not yet exhausted, that there was something yet possible, superior to them all. We would have pronounced it incredible, had it not actually occurred. It is for the invisible God to make himself visible, and assume a habitation among men, to be born, and live, and die. This, which was in appearance forbidden by his spirituality, his omnipresence, and his eternity, was nevertheless accomplished, by God being manifested in the flesh; and now, in the language of one of the appointed witnesses of this stupendous event, we have heard, we have seen with our eyes, we have looked upon him, and our hands have handled that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us.

The unseen, eternal, omnipotent God dressed himself in a human form, and gave himself a local, temporal, tangible existence, so as to bring himself within reach of our corporeal senses; he came down to dwell among us, not by a mere symbol of his presence, but really, personally, visibly. And thus he disclosed himself to man, not at second hand, through the ministry of his servants, nor by occasional and momentary displays of his own dread power and magnificence, but by a life of intimate, uninterrupted converse in their midst. We now no longer merely read about him, or hear of him, or reason respecting him, or look upon his likeness which we bear within us (alas! almost obliterated), or gaze upon the dread workings of one himself concealed from sight; but we have been with him and seen him, listened to his words, observed his acts, witnessed his Spirit, marked the tenor of his life, been admitted to a close, endearing familiarity with him. We have not, indeed, been taken up to heaven to see God there; but, what is better far for us, he has come down to earth and manifested himself here. And he is disclosed to us, not attended by the voice louder than the peal of seven thunders, the dread magnificence, the blinding glory, the terrific displays of power which would have made our flesh to quake upon us, and deprived us of all conscious exercise of reason, if not of life. But the Divinity is so softened down to our weak senses, that we can bear to see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. In seeing him we see the Father. The God whom no

man hath seen at any time, the only begotten Son hath declared. In the person of Jesus, who was himself the true God and eternal life, who is the image of the invisible God, the brightness of his glory and the express image of his person, the Word of God, he has been exhibited to view. What the written word of God labours to spread out for us on the page, that Jesus was in his whole person—the revelation of God. In seeing Christ, we gaze on him, whom else no man can see and live. He is no longer the unseen, the unknown,—he is the manifested Deity.

It is interesting, after contemplating the great truths and important facts of the Bible, in the certainty of their presentation and the perfection of their outline, and it gives us a fresh conviction how admirably they are adapted to the wants of man, to turn to those without a revelation and see how the deep necessities of human nature made themselves felt even there, and created earnest longings and dim anticipations of the truth even among those who were ignorant of it in its reality; to find that as we stray among the distorted fancies of heathendom, and their gross absurdities, and their frantic abominations, we may pick up, here and there, battered unsightly fragments of the polished and symmetrical statue of truth, which, it is true, we could never gather into one, nor even from these confused and scattered fragments image to ourselves the figure that they formed, but which, with a model of the statue before us, we can nevertheless recognize and assign each to its place. And

now, the human form they mostly gave their gods, their incarnations and apotheoses, the fabled intercourse of gods and men, gods dwelling on the earth, and great deliverers born of a pure virgin,—what are these, found up and down the Pagan world, but blind nature unconsciously yearning after the truth, which we behold in Jesus, of “God manifest in the flesh?”

Some have busied themselves in the search for heathen parallels to this and other Christian truths, with the view of bringing them into discredit, by thus impliedly rating them as of equal authority with acknowledged falsehoods. And they have paraded the results of their search with an air of triumph, as though they had convinced themselves that the incarnation of Jesus was no more entitled to belief than the incarnations of Brahma, or the trinity in Jehovah were no more to be regarded than that of the Hindoo godhead, and as though the infinite superiority of Christian truth above Pagan error did not prevent both from standing on a precise level. But no amount of spurious coin that can be shown me, shall make me cast away the genuine of which it is the attempted though worthless representation. I find in Christianity the truth pure and unadulterated—the genuine coin bearing the stamp of Heaven. And I shall not relinquish it because there may be discovered analogies in the superstitions of the Pagan. I have no fear of such discoveries. I rather welcome them, and lay hold of every one that is brought me, as to my mind affording additional

confirmation of the Bible faith ; for I find in such analogies fresh evidence that the Scripture truth is the truth which man requires, seeing that by necessity of nature, as it were, he still blindly gropes after it, even when it is not given him from above.

And now we ought, for the proper presentation of our subject, to go into some detail regarding the various perfections of the Divine Nature, and show how, in respect to them all, our knowledge receives new confirmation and additional clearness by this manifestation of God in the flesh ; and how, in the case of many, it receives large accessions above all that was previously known, or could, apart from the incarnation, be known regarding them. And here be it observed, that we are not now speaking of Jesus as a teacher. We are not comparing the instructions which He the seal of all the prophets delivered, with those which had previously been communicated by others under the guidance of His Spirit. Though if this were our theme, we would claim for Him emphatically the name and the character of the Great Teacher, and we fancy that we would not find it difficult to show, that the new truths which He delivered, and the new force and clearness which old truths received from His lips, place the dispensation which He introduced in comparison with that which preceded it, as the brightness of noonday to the early dawn. It is not, however, the superiority of the instructions which He, who spake as man never spake, communicated, that our subject invites us to consider, but simply the manifestation of God in His person.

The very existence of God receives new confirmation here. Indeed, some have referred to the miracles of Jesus as affording to their minds the only argument which was absolutely irrefragable, that there is an intelligent being, the author and the Lord of Nature. The unity of God is also freshly demonstrated both against the thousand deities of an idolatrous Paganism, and the two independent principles of good and evil of the Persian superstition, by the unlimited authority which Jesus freely exercised, commanding obedience in the kingdom of darkness as well as that of light. But we cannot delay on these and similar points.

We pass to the holiness of God. This was set in a light by the incarnation in which it never appeared before, and in which (without designing to limit the wisdom or power of God) we may say that, as far as we can judge, it could not have appeared without it. Our proof of this is drawn not from the fact, melancholy as it is, that the idea of holiness is entirely lost among the heathen, to whom God has not made Himself known. They have not only parted with its reality within themselves and in their own practice, but the very notion of it has vanished from among them. And among all the attributes which the Pagan ascribes to his deities,—some of them of the most horrible and shocking character,—that of holiness is never once to be met with. And when Christianity comes to be introduced among them, our missionaries have to grapple with this giant difficulty in the outset, of waking in the breasts of a people an idea, which

has died out ages since, of which none among them have any sort of conception, and for which not even a tolerable equivalent can be found in their language.

But though the heathen world had lost this most necessary idea of God's holiness, it was preserved among the people who possessed a revelation; yet even among them God's holiness was not known, and it was impossible that any verbal revelation should teach it as it became known through the medium of the incarnation. And here we cannot pretend to detail the various ways in which the incarnation illustrated God's holiness. It will doubtless spontaneously occur to you all that the very errand of Jesus was to magnify God's holy law, and to destroy sin as the object of His supreme abhorrence; and that the necessity here exhibited of a perfect atonement for sin, before even God himself can consistently with His nature deliver the sinner from death, sheds a lustre on the holiness of God which nothing that we can conceive of but this could ever have put there. Without, however, stopping to unfold these and other considerations to which your minds will readily turn, and which amply establish the point before us, there is another aspect less frequently presented, and which perhaps may not immediately suggest itself to all my hearers, in which the incarnation illustrates, as nothing else could, God's holiness.

We are told of the spotless holiness of God. We see it in all His acts, and all His dealings with His people. We witness ourselves, or have confirmed

unto us by those who did, the immediate exertions of His power, which had for their object the display of His holiness. And yet this is the holiness of God in heaven—a God who has all things at His command, to whom no possible temptation can consequently be presented, and who, apart from the holiness of His nature, cannot, from His very independence and all-sufficiency, have even the slightest shadow of a motive to do what is wrong. What is there to exhibit to us that this unsullied holiness of God arises from the perfect purity of His being, and is not in part the mere effect of His infinite exaltation? If holiness is always triumphant, what is there which so evidently brings out that this is due to His ineffably righteous nature, and which so positively excludes the thought that this may in part be because a triumph is easily gained by one who is beyond the reach of a foe, and where no danger could possibly be apprehended? And what is there which positively excludes the thought that He is requiring something hard of man, when He demands of him never to yield to a temptation, nor to be overcome by an assault, when they come so thickly and so powerfully upon him? But who is not conscious that a new and decided impression is made upon his mind, when he sees the Most High resign for a season the infinite exaltation he possesses, take a frail and feeble nature with all its sinless infirmities, and expose Himself to temptation, and then observes how with all the weaknesses of His assumed nature, in all the trials to which He was subjected, and though He was tempted in

all points like as we are, He was nevertheless entirely free from the least taint of sin, and that Christ fainting in the desert equally with Christ ruling on the throne of the heavens, is perfect in holiness? This reveals to us a side of this attribute, and under an impressive aspect, which but for the incarnation never could have been seen.

And thus it is with all the attributes of God. They all gather fresh lustre from the mystery of the incarnation; and when they are viewed in the face of Jesus Christ, they appear with an impressiveness which they never before assumed. Where was the long-suffering of God ever so exhibited as we see it in Jesus? The sparing mercy of God to rebellious men is indeed exhibited in His providence perpetually toward each individual sinner and toward the whole race. It is a proof of most amazing long-suffering, that He has not lost all patience with our guilty race, and that the iniquities, and the crimes, and the abominations which are perpetrated in the world, have not provoked Him to sweep the whole out of existence, and to bear with such provocations no longer. But it gives us a more vivid sense of this long-suffering, when we see God coming in human form, and dwelling in the very midst of these iniquities and provocations, becoming himself the object of unmeasured hostility, bearing every form of reproach and indignity, and with a power at His command which would have consumed offenders in a moment, allowing Himself to be led unresistingly as a lamb to the slaughter, and making use of His divine prerogative

only to open paradise to the penitent thief, while from His lips, instead of imprecations, we hear the voice of intercession, "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do."

If He had given proofs before of His regard for the human race, what a nearness does this induce beyond anything else that is conceivable, that He should come and live among us and wear a human nature, become bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh, partake of our infirmities and weaknesses, that He might deliver us from them, and take our nature with Him to glory, and seat it on the throne as a pledge that we should be glorified with Him as His brethren, as the members of His body, as a part of Himself! And how is the love of God illustrated by the incarnation! This, in fact, is the great proof of divine love, beside which every other, however vast in itself, appears diminutive. God commendeth His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

And so if we had time to speak of the truth of God and His justice, and His wisdom, and the other perfections of His nature, we should see how all of them gain a new radiance from God manifest in the flesh. This is our warrant for saying as we have said, and now repeat, that the incarnation manifests God to men as He was never exhibited to them before; and that if it brought no other benefit with it than this, that it brought God nearer to us, and made Him better known, it would deserve still to be reckoned an unspeakable gift, and would be worthy

of the highest praises that can throughout eternity be paid.

There is another side of our subject which we had desired to present, but which the lateness of the hour forbids us now to touch. We have shown you how the character of God is exhibited to man in the incarnation. We would like to have pointed out to you how the feelings of man's natural heart toward God were exhibited here likewise, in their treatment of God manifest in the flesh; how perfect goodness and celestial excellence raised against Him the malice which betrayed, condemned, and crucified Him; and how it is the same enmity of the natural heart still which leads so many to side with His persecutors, and if they do not madly cry Away with Him, nevertheless to show by their lives as well as by their professions, that they will not have this man to reign over them.

RELIGIOUS RETIREMENT.

BY

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And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, He went out and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.—MARK i. 35.

THE extreme simplicity and conciseness, which characterize the Scripture narratives, veil, from the casual and unreflecting reader, their full beauty, richness and power. The mere outlines of scenes and incidents are often given, which, when viewed in the light of their attending circumstances, excite us by their interest and melting pathos, or become invested with grandeur and sublimity.

Our Saviour, we are told, had been laboriously engaged the day previous in relieving the afflicted and tormented; for “at even when the sun did set, they brought unto Him all that were diseased, and them that were possessed with devils.” Engaged, probably, in this benevolent work till late at night, He then retired to His couch; but not to rest. His soul was agonized by the sufferings of His creatures; the scenes of anguish and the sights of woe, which had so recently passed before Him, filled Him with sorrow. He, whose heart was so keenly sensitive to others’ grief, and so deeply touched with the feeling of our infirmities, was so burdened with pity and compassion, that

“rising up a great while before day, He went out and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.”

This simple incident in the life of our Saviour should inspire us with love and gratitude to Him; and His example, in thus flying from the society of man, to seek in retirement and solitude that uninterrupted converse with His Father, that relief, that comfort, and that strength, which the world cannot give, should be sufficient to teach the Christian his duty in this respect, and to show him where he can enjoy the privilege of communion with his God. But when we find that *our Lord frequently and habitually sought retirement*, that He often withdrew from the multitudes who pressed so eagerly after Him, and, threading the mountain defiles, sought in its deep ravines and hidden recesses solitudes for secret prayer; when we see Him frequently retiring to that lovely garden “over the brook Kedron,” and amidst its solemn shades and leafy grottoes, praying and meditating; when we find Him there alone, during the last night before His crucifixion, engaged in agonizing prayer, and earnestly imploring strength from His Father in heaven, the fact becomes invested with tenfold import and interest to all who wish to follow in the footsteps of their Divine Exemplar.

God, *in creating man*, had this important duty and privilege in view. As with His other laws, so with regard to this part of His will, He has impressed its type upon nature. He created the day, with its busy, noisy life, and the quiet night, when stillness reigns and shuts the world from sight; the

restless ocean, with its ceaseless, loud-resounding diapason, and the gentle river, "winding at its own sweet will;" the roaring tempest, with its crashing thunders, and the sunny calm; the earth-shaking volcano, and at its foot the quiet vale. He not only created man a social being, with full capacities of receiving enjoyment from, and gifted him with faculties for imparting knowledge and pleasure to others, but He also supplied him with loftier faculties of soul, and conferred upon him the high privilege of communing with Him, thus affording him the power to cultivate that spiritual part of his being, which places him in the scale of creation "but a little lower than the angels." Therefore he was introduced into a terrestrial paradise of beauty, and surrounded with everything calculated to lift his thoughts to heaven. Out of its leafy luxuriance He formed for him attractive and secluded retreats—places where he might employ his time in contemplation and devotion. And here, in these lovely, sequestered spots, many a bright, angelic being, no doubt, conversed with Adam concerning the mysteries of the upper world, and unravelled the wonders of God's great universe; and here, too, God himself condescended to visit him. When the sun had sunk beneath the rocky ramparts of Paradise, their deepening shadows thickening the sombre twilight, when the beasts had couched to rest, and the carolling of the birds had ceased and they had folded their wings for sleep, when the winds had lulled to the softest zephyrs, and all na-

ture was hushed in repose, in the cool of the calm evening, God walked in the garden.

In accordance with the obvious wish of Jehovah, *the ancient saints*, whose biographies are given in the Old Testament, frequently practised this duty. How eminently was it characteristic of Daniel ! Though his life was threatened in consequence, yet did he retire thrice a day to his chamber to pray. With what frequency did David seek retirement ! How often do we find him communing with God through the still watches of the night ! How often and how eagerly did he fly from regal pomp and the thronging, distracting cares of state, to enjoy the pleasure and privilege of secret prayer and meditation ! The sweet music of that magic harp, now quickly vibrating with the joyous anthem of praise and triumph, now trembling with the soft, plaintive notes of sorrow and contrition, has been floated down through ages, finds a responsive echo in the heart of every Christian, and will roll its undulations into the concert of everlasting song.

The primitive Christians, also, practised this duty to a great extent. Prevented by their relentless persecutors from worshipping in public assemblies ; hunted like wild beasts ; driven from the abodes of men to the shelter of mountains and almost impenetrable forests ; in these rocky retreats, in the subterranean caverns of the earth, they adored their God in secret, secure from the intrusion of those who thirsted for their blood. Oh ! how precious did this privilege at length become ! What sweet sanctuaries were these gloomy rocks

and caves ! How often, from these deep ravines, overhung with dark, beetling crags, did the songs of praise and the voice of earnest, soul-wrestling prayer ascend as a cloud of rich, inextinguishable incense to the skies ? Highly did they appreciate and enjoy this constant communion with God, for they learned to feel that it was not always solitude to be alone. So powerful was its influence upon those compelled by persecution to resort to it, that men, in later times, mistaking the cause, attributing to solitude and seclusion what was due to the motive which prompted, and the proper and sacred employment of it, sought this retirement from different motives and for other purposes. Many, becoming disgusted with society, and disappointed in their aspirations after wealth, power, and worldly happiness, turned misanthropes, and leaving the busy haunts of men, shut themselves up in caverns and secluded places, there in sullenness to brood over their disappointments and nurse their contempt and hatred of society and of their fellow-creatures. Others made it a pretext for extraordinary piety and sanctity, and thus was originated the unscriptural, pernicious system of monasticism.

But here we have an instance of the beautiful consistency which characterized the life of our Saviour. The whole of the preceding day, even far into the night, He had been actively engaged in relieving suffering humanity, in curing the diseased, and in casting out devils. Although He retired to the mountain to pray, it was after He had fed the thousands who resorted to Him, and preached to

them the word of life. He combined the most laborious efforts to promulgate the blessed Gospel, and relieve the diseased, with frequent seclusion.

To us, however, the days of persecution are over. Every man can here worship God under his own vine and fig-tree, without fear or molestation. The recluse belongs to other times, and is viewed as the being of a romantic, obsolete age; and, thank God! that night of the world is passing away. But have we not some reason to fear that the practice of religious retirement, the frequent, habitual communion with God, which distinguished primitive Christianity, is passing away with them? Is not this duty, in our day, too much neglected? We fear that such is the case. The enterprises of the Church do indeed demand the most energetic activity of Christians, but should not supersede the duty of retired contemplation and devotion. Christ felt as fully the need of activity as any modern Christian. He had as great an appreciation of the vastness of the field of labour, of the world lying in wickedness, as the most active now. None will deny that He laboured as much, as incessantly as the most devoted Christian of the present day, and yet He often retired and spent hours, aye, whole nights, in secret prayer and meditation. The fact is, men are so prone to place reliance on their own efforts, that they are constantly multiplying machinery, and their time and attention are so much absorbed in its improvement in the vain expectation of creating power; there is so much time con-

sumed in parade and ostentatious efforts, that they acquire very little relish for private supplication to God. The same Great Master, who commanded His disciples to preach the Gospel to all nations, also advised the Christian—"when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly," and thy labours also. If Christians would resort more frequently to their closets, and thus become more deeply imbued with the spirit of their Master, and of those who devoted their whole substance to the service of Christ, we might, probably, have fewer plans and eloquent speeches, less theatrical Christianity, but more efficient labourers and more fruit.

The importance of religious retirement cannot be doubted in such an age as ours, in which there is so much error and infidelity, and when the very activity and excitement, connected with our ecclesiastical operations, are adapted to divert us from the maintenance and culture of personal and spiritual piety. The tendency of the age is to scepticism, of an insinuating, plausible kind. It does not stalk abroad in its bold, repulsive character, with the hideous, hell-glazed features of vile and blasphemous infidelity, but comes in the attractive dress of liberality, of fashionable maxim, with the soft whisper of expediency and worldly policy. We must suit our conduct, our plans to the prevailing tastes of the day; we must not shock the world by singularity, but yield as far as possible to its

fashions, its theories, and its forms. Thus we are gradually led from the truth, and begin to look for motives and principles in the world, which ought to be searched for only in the will of God. How necessary that we should frequently withdraw from these seductive wiles of our enemies, that we may carefully examine them in the pure light of God's truth, and detect their falsity! How anxious we should be that our breastplate and heavenly armour be entire and impenetrable, even to the finest pointed shaft of infidelity and error! How steadily should we keep in view that bright ray of light which streams from the upper world to guide our steps, for

“The world's infectious; few bring back at eve,
“Immaculate, the manners of the morn.”

Not from this source alone, as we have just intimated, is the Christian in danger. In the present day, his mind is apt to be filled with great operations. The conversion of a single soul, the salvation of his neighbour or child is too insignificant for his enlarged and expanded views. His own personal defects and spiritual wants are gilded by the illusive brightness of the world-grasping plans in which he is engaged, his own individuality is swallowed up in the magnitude and magnificence of the world-regenerating engines in impetuous action around him;—their thunderings drown that still, small voice, which whispers to his own heart, entreating an audience. He is caught in the rushing blast of enthusiasm, dashed along for awhile in the

wake of these powerful engines, but gradually the fires of his own piety go out, the needle has rusted on its pivot, and he is left at last a sailless, chartless wreck upon the treacherous sea of the world. He is like the philosopher, who spent his whole time and patrimony in endeavouring to discover some principle, some magic stone, to save the race from hunger and from want, and died himself at last of poverty and starvation. How insiduously does this out-of-door Christianity operate! How soon, when not balanced and regulated by personal piety, do we become puffed up with self-righteousness, with great conceit of the power and influence we are wielding! How seductive the world's applause! How it betrays us into ostentatious benevolence! How tame and tiresome does that quiet closet become, where are no hosannas to greet our ears, no trumpeting of good works that are seen of men, no brilliant schemes, but the secret converse with our own poor, sinful hearts, the humiliating spectacle of our utter unworthiness and the sense of our necessary and entire dependence upon God. I would not undervalue these organizations and public enterprises. They are powerful means for the glory of God and the salvation of men, but they are still mere means, engines 'tis true with tremendous capacities, but in themselves possessing no power. The power must come from God. Without his blessing, they are worse than useless. That power is called into action by the true holiness of his children. It can be obtained only by the assiduous culture of personal piety, by communion

with him, and by constant prayer. This is the grand conductor between earth and heaven. It is prayer that "moves the hand that moves the world."

It is a great mistake to suppose that they are the most efficient who are always out in the world and in a constant state of bustle and excitement. Christians are too apt to gauge their usefulness, and calculate the success of their plans by the numbers engaged in carrying them forward, and the amount of excitement attending their operations. How often do they measure God's blessing by the number of dollars and cents contributed towards their prosecution ! But this is a delusion. The humblest Christian in his closet may be more powerful than the greatest organization. See yon mighty vessel ploughing the ocean, dashing the spray in clouds around its resistless prow ; hear the thundering roar of its machinery ; the soul of that leviathan, he who governs it at will and directs its course through the stormy, trackless deep, and controls its hidden forces, is in that retired spot upon deck, the quietest being in the ship ;—it is he, who has his eye fixed upon the compass, and his hand upon the helm.

Besides in such great enterprises there is the more urgent need of calm, prayerful deliberation, and consultation, not with your weak, short-sighted fellow-mortal, but with God, the author and finisher of every good word and work.

Even for worldly purposes, men find occasional and sometimes frequent retirement necessary.

The *Merchant* often secludes himself for the purpose of forming and arranging his plans. How his mind becomes absorbed with the calculations which involve his pecuniary advancement, in estimating the chances of success in certain enterprises, or in designing means for extricating his property from threatened loss! And do not you find it necessary to withdraw from the exciting and distracting scenes of life, to examine into your account with high heaven? Are you not interested in ascertaining how you stand with your Maker, who will demand a full account of the manner in which you have employed the talents committed to your care? Is it of no importance to you to discover how you may increase your treasure in heaven, a treasure more precious far than all the untold wealth of gold and gems buried in a thousand mines?—Look at that *Philosopher*, bending with intensest interest over alembic and crucible, watching far into the still night the mysterious operations of nature, striving to elicit a knowledge of the laws which keep the created universe in harmonious movement, or to deduce some principle which may contribute to the comfort, the health and the happiness of mankind. And do you feel no desire to investigate the laws of God's moral government? Is not a knowledge of his will as important to you as that of the laws of nature to the philosopher? You cannot be truly devoted to Christ without feeling something of the same absorbing interest, of the same desire to commune with the Father of lights, and to obtain from him.

grace to fit you for your Christian duties. Will you, can you go through life without constantly supplicating God to make you instrumental in saving your fellow-men from that fearful wrath to come? Should the Philosopher consume his time and energies for the benefit of man's physical being, and you not feel it a duty to obtain power and direction from on high, to release them from the bonds of iniquity, and the degradation of sin, and point out to them the path to eternal felicity? shall the *Poet* court retirement and solitude, that he may indulge in the enjoyments of fancy, revel in the vast, beautiful regions of imagination, and send forth his winged thoughts to bring him unsubstantial visions from the ideal world; and will you refuse to retire that you may commune with the Father of spirits and meditate with rapture upon the glorious scenes of that bright world to which you are an heir, whose splendours far transcend the brightest vision of the Poet's dream?

Religious retirement affords *the best opportunity for increasing our religious knowledge*. The value of this is obvious from the truth that *religious knowledge is essential to a true and saving faith*. Faith is the Christian's telescope;—it is the key of heaven;—"the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." We must have some true knowledge of God's holy law; of our moral condition, and of the plan of salvation, or we can have no true and saving faith; and the more sanctified light we possess, the more intelligent and acceptable will be our faith. Now, as retirement

affords us the best opportunities for increasing our religious knowledge, it is in this respect of great advantage. The objects that we seek are impalpable, and invisible to the mortal eye. The great God, the Holy Spirit; the denizens of the skies, the celestial city and its mansions not made with hands, its

———“Choral song, and burst
Sublime of instrumental harmony,”

are, to the gross senses of the world, vague, indistinct, unappreciable mysteries. For, as it is written, “eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit, for the Spirit searcheth the deep things of God.” The true Christian, who delights in communion with the Holy Spirit, and meditates upon his law, daily acquires a stronger vision and gains a clearer and more distinct appreciation of heavenly realities. They begin to assume for him a distinctness almost equal to that of the objects of natural sense around him; and eventually he is impressed with the unsubstantial, fleeting character of terrestrial things, and the greater permanency and reality of the heavenly world; for,

“All, all on earth is shadow, all beyond
Is substance.”

In the scientific world, Bacon is a striking example of this wonderful power of knowledge. Becoming intimately acquainted with the workings

of nature and deeply versed in her laws, he was enabled to penetrate far into the future, and view results such as when described by him, were looked upon as romantic extravagance, rivalling and surpassing the fabled wonders of eastern story; and yet the greatest of these visions have been realized. The mighty power of steam is doing the work of the world, impelling sailless vessels which outstrip the wind, and the chariot exceeding in velocity the fleet horse of the desert;—thoughts are flying with the quickness of light around the globe, and the lightning has been forced to act as the amanuensis of man. Thus the Christian, by becoming familiar with the oracles of God, by meditating upon heavenly themes, can acquire an insight of divine things, surpassed only by inspiration. He can thus acquire a faith which is firm, a knowledge which is certain. Thus it was with those blessed martyrs of old, of whom the world was not worthy. By constant intercourse with their God, through their high attainments in divine knowledge, they obtained that powerful faith which supported them through privation, suffering, even the tortures of cruel deaths. God and heaven were to them not merely beautiful imagery, but glorious, living realities, and many a feeble saint, sustained by it, could look joyfully through the fierce flames that were consuming the quivering fibres of their bodies, up to the serene skies above, and see the heavens open, the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of God, and the angelic squadrons waiting to escort them to the Lamb slain for them, and for whom he held

ready the martyr's crown of glory. Milton, with his wonderful imagination, which could wing its unwearied flight back through unnumbered ages, and hold him an awed spectator of conflicting hosts, the mighty warfare of Michael and his angelic band with Satan and his swarming myriads of lost and fallen fiends, which could circle in its steady flight the sulphurous atmosphere of hell, and view its dreary caverns, its hideous monsters, and its scenes of horrid, never-ending woe, and then soar to the shining realms of light, gaze with eye undimmed upon the sapphire battlements of heaven, and listen to the entrancing strains of its great chorus of bursting hallelujahs and harping symphonies, possessed no greater privilege than the humblest saint, who, in his secret meditations, dwells upon the glories of his promised heaven, or bathes his soul in the pure light of revelation. Let me take you to yonder cell. The massive walls shut in a human being from the world. Look through the grating. There he sits, wrapt in meditation. The walls are bare, and the rough, untapestried stones chill you with a sense of cheerless solitude and sad loneliness. Yet that prisoner feels not alone. To him, this secluded solitude is more glorious than all the pomps and pageant of the world. That contracted, gloomy cell more enchanting than the thronged presence-chamber of the most potent monarch upon earth. Scenes are passing before his mind, which in beauty and grandeur defy the painter's power to embody, and mock the faintness of his most brilliant tints. The whole Christian life is before him;—he sees

him arrested by divine truth, follows him eagerly to the cross, accompanies him through his toilsome journey. He trembles for his safety in the dark valley and shadow of death, his blood is chilled by the terrific fiends who there assail and attempt to destroy him, he sits down with him in that paradise of loveliness, the land of Beulah, and drinks of the cool, refreshing waters of life. He looks through the shepherd's glass, and feels the thrill of ecstatic delight as he catches with him the first prospect of the celestial city. He sees him passing through the icy river of death, emerging from its dark waters and entering the gates of the New Jerusalem. He sees him passing up through the long vista of glorified spirits, and the crown placed upon his head amidst myriads of angels shouting the anthems of victory, and striking their jewelled harps of gold. Need I tell you that the humble artizan, John Bunyan, was enabled by meditation and private contemplation to obtain these wonderful visions, and to view and record with such vividness all the incidents of the Christian pilgrim's life,—his hopes—his fears—his temptations—his struggles,—his victories and his glorious reward? Such divine knowledge, such an insight of the spiritual world may every Christian obtain, who withdraws himself more and more from earth, and meditates on heaven.

Religious knowledge is also necessary to *correct practice*. Without a knowledge of the will of God, how shall we regulate our conduct in consistency with our duty? Without intelligence, how can we

properly apportion our time and means and personal exertions? Without religious knowledge, how shall we be able to persevere? The reason why some are so inconsistent, indiscreet and fickle, is, because they are so ignorant of the nature of true religion and its divine requirements. Hence, the Apostle says, that men are alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them. They are so much in the world, and so seldom with God, that whilst their tastes, their pursuits, and their conduct, are becoming more and more allied to earth, they gradually lose all spiritual attainments, until at last God is scarcely in their thoughts.

Moreover, religious knowledge is essential to *our personal sanctification*. "Sanctify them by thy truth, thy word is truth." Now, if religious knowledge is thus indispensable to faith and practice and personal holiness, and if religious retirement affords the best opportunities for the acquisition of such knowledge, then must its advantages in this respect be invaluable. In order that man may regain the divine image in which he was created, that he may fulfil the divine injunction, "be ye holy, for I am holy," he must endeavour to become assimilated to his Maker, by frequently communing with him, and seeking to become thoroughly pervaded by the Holy Spirit, and intimately acquainted with, and entirely subject to his will.

Religious retirement is necessary to *a due and profitable self-examination*. In the busy world, how can this be accomplished? The objects around

us, the excitement connected with our pursuits, the false, distorted views which the world gives to everything examined through its medium, preclude anything like an honest examination of our hearts. Its uproar and contentions, its cares and perturbations penetrate to and agitate our inmost soul. It is in retirement alone, in the calm serenity of seclusion that we can look in upon ourselves, and lay bare all those secret springs of action so carefully concealed from the world. Here we can duly estimate the motives that are actuating our conduct. Here we can calmly review the grounds of our professed interest in the Saviour and the evidences of our faith. It is in retirement that we can be honest with ourselves. Here are no inducements to dissimulation and concealment. We feel that we are in the presence of the heart-searching God, and are constrained to cry out, "Lord search me and try me, show me all my defects, my wants and my sinfulness." It is under such searching investigations, such deep probings of the conscience, that we can know our true position. Like the mariner, then, when out of sight of land, with ocean around him, and the sky above, resort to the compass of divine truth, study well its cardinal points, examine thoroughly the records of your past progress, so that you may be able to steer this richly-freighted bark heavenward, and to detect the slightest swerving from its safe and proper path.

In retirement, we have *the best opportunity for confession and contrition*. What Christian is not painfully sensible of constant transgressions of the

law of God?—of great and numerous omissions of duty? How rapidly do these sins accumulate! How they oppress and burden the conscience! He must have relief. The instincts of our nature even, demand a confidant; the heart is tortured by its own consciousness of guilt. Where will he fly from the compunctions of conscience, the lashings of remorse. To whom will he, can he fully confide the sad story of his weaknesses and transgressions? Will he lay his heart bare to the cold gaze of his fellow-sinner? Even the nearest friends sometimes cruelly abuse the confidence reposed in them. Where else can he go, but to his gracious Father, against whom he has offended, and there in solitude, upon his bended knees, exclaim, “against thee, thee only, have I sinned,” and freely confess all the evil he has done. There he can confess fully those secret sins which he would not reveal to his bosom friend. There he feels certain of being understood, when telling God of those sins that do so easily beset him, and with a heart overflowing with emotion, he pours out his soul in sorrow, assured that Christ will not reject him on account of his vileness, that a contrite and broken heart he will not despise. Besides, as many sins may, at the time of their commission, be either unnoticed or else inadequately repented of, it is necessary that we should retire from the world habitually, in order that they may be recalled,—that we may dwell more seriously upon their character and aggravations,—repent of them more sincerely and

deeply, and resolve and pray for grace to enable us to guard against them in future.

Another advantage of retirement is, that it enables us *to obtain more correct views of this world.*

Whilst engaged in its active pursuits and pleasures, we are often under a delusion, and become the victims of our own folly. Well may this world be compared to a great theatre, whose players are madmen. Phantoms are flitting amongst the thronging crowds who view them as realities. Ambition, holding forth its fading laurel,—sharp-featured Avarice, with his piles of gold,—rosy-crowned Pleasure, beaming with her deceitful smiles, and presenting to her followers the cup of sparkling death,—these, and a host of others, are pursued and courted with the most unbounded eagerness. There we see the votaries of Ambition, wasting the energies of a whole life in struggling up to some eminence which elevates them a little above those immediately around them, and yet, scarcely have they placed their feet upon it, when it begins to crumble beneath them, scarcely has the flush of success faded from their excited features, when the laurel is snatched from their brows, and placed by the fickle crowd upon another god of the hour. What thousands do we see toiling from the rising to the setting sun, whose eyes are never turned upward to behold God's glorious universe, but fixed upon the earth, grovelling like worms, all their energies, thoughts and aspirations devoted to the work of scraping together a few handfuls of glittering dust, only to drop from their tight grasp, as

the icy finger of death palsies the hands which hold it. Amidst this ardour of excitement, amidst this struggling, panting crowd, the Christian often becomes infected with the like passions, and overcome by the spell of the tempter, is drawn within the charmed circle, and almost entirely forgets and loses sight of his great destiny and the realities of his heavenly inheritance. But let him turn aside, and calmly contemplate the scenes of earth. How different do they appear! How vain! How transient! Who, in such an hour, can restrain the exclamation, "what shadows we are, what shadows we pursue?" He has retired to the solitude of his chamber; his memory runs back through his past life. It is busy with the scenes and companions of his youth. Where are they now? Gone to the dark and silent tomb. Their familiar voices greet not his ear, their forms no longer meet his eye. How quickly did they pass away! What is the world with all its honours, its wealth, its pleasures, now to them? What will their value be to us when called to leave them for ever? Our early views and high expectations, how few have ever been realized! The honors that we have won and worn, how empty have they proved themselves to be! And the scenes which now surround us,—the objects of present pursuit,—the aspirations and hopes which now animate and impel our souls, are they not equally vain? Will they not prove as certainly illusive? Contemplation now unfolds her wings, and rising above the hazy atmosphere, places us upon some lofty eminence. The world is

beneath us. The loud roar of its merriment cannot be heard so high, the swelling chorus of the orchestra ravishes not our ears, the insignia of worldly honour, the gorgeous robes of wealth and power cannot be discerned, even the bright gems of her richest diadems flash no gleam of light. We can merely see the crowds hurrying to and fro, pursuing with avidity the shadows which are ever mocking their expectations and eluding their embrace. How rapidly do they disappear in the graves at their very feet! The earth closes over them, and there those pampered bodies for whose welfare souls have been lost, lie amidst the decaying myriads who have preceded them, and quickly moulder into dust. We see change, constant change, nothing substantial, nothing satisfactory, nothing permanent. We gaze around upon the mighty mountains, appearing as though they at least were built for eternity, rooted in the heart of earth, and piercing the heavens with their snow-capped summits,

. “and yet,
“What are they, but a wreck and residue
“Whose only business is to perish.”

We rise higher. Earth, with its lofty mountains, its extended plains, and its vast oceans, has dwindled to a point. We are surrounded by immense, magnificent planets;—thousands and tens of thousands of worlds are rolling in awful majesty and grandeur around blazing centres;—as far as the

strained vision can reach millions more are flaming in remoter fields.

“A flood of glory bursts from all the skies.”

We are bewildered and overpowered in this vast, mazy splendour of circling orbs. What are all these but the golden dust of the universe, which God has poured forth to beautify and adorn his footstool? What but

“A constellation of ten thousand gems

“Set in one signet, flames on the right hand

“Of majesty divine,

the “blazing seal of his Omnipotence and Love.” These shall all perish, and as a vesture shall God fold them up.—We ascend still higher, up through the starry hosts to the ineffable centre and source of all glory, the throne of God. Tell me, now, what is yonder earth? What its heaps of hoarded wealth compared with these jasper walls, gates of pearl, crystal foundations and golden streets? What its hollow, death-drugged pleasures compared with that flood of ecstatic bliss which rolls its ceaseless tide throughout the realms of light? What are all the tinselled glories of earth, its diadems and gorgeous robes, the baubles of royalty and power, what its greatest pageants, compared with that presented by thousand upon ten thousand thousand saints thronging around the great white throne, crowned with the flashing, full-gemmed coronals of heaven? What are all earth’s painted insignificancies compared with the untold splendours of the New Jerusalem?

Such contemplations, retrospections and reflections cannot but make us wiser and better men ;—they cannot but moderate our worldly desires, because they enable us to set a truer estimate upon all earthly things. Behold the effect upon the Puritans, as recorded by the pen of impartial history. “ Their minds derived a peculiar character from the daily contemplation of superior beings and eternal interests. To know God, to serve him, to enjoy him, was with them the great end of existence. They rejected with contempt the ceremonious homage which other sects substituted for the pure worship of the soul. Instead of catching occasional glimpses of the Deity through an obscuring veil, they aspired to gaze full on the intolerable brightness, and to commune with him face to face. The difference between the greatest and meanest of mankind seemed to vanish when compared with the boundless interval which separated the whole race from Him on whom their eyes were constantly fixed. If they were unacquainted with the works of philosophers and poets, they were deeply read in the oracles of God. If their names were not found in the registers of heralds, they felt assured that they were recorded in the Book of Life. If their steps were not accompanied by a splendid train of menials, legions of ministering angels had charge over them. Their palaces were houses not made with hands : their diadems crowns of glory which should never fade away. For his sake empires had risen, flourished and decayed. For his sake the Almighty

had proclaimed his will by the pen of the evangelist and the harp of the prophet. He had been rescued by no common deliverer from the grasp of no common foe. He had been ransomed by the sweat of no vulgar agony, by the blood of no earthly sacrifice. It was for him that the sun had been darkened, that the rocks had been rent, that the dead had arisen, that all nature had shuddered at the sufferings of her expiring God."

Finally, the contemplations which are appropriate and natural to the pious in retirement, are strongly adapted *to improve their affections, and to increase their attachment to heaven.*

While reflecting upon the vanity of all earthly attainments and pleasures;—while surveying the melancholy wreck of our fondest and most cherished hopes,—while contemplating the uncertainty and shortness of our present career,—how natural it is to turn our attention to those spiritual and heavenly objects which are certain, solid and enduring! The heart, that will and must have some object of interest and affection, turns to these with increased desire, confidence and pleasure. From the vain pursuits of earth,—its unsatisfying possessions and enjoyments,—its sins and sorrows,—its crushed hopes—its hidden griefs and mortal agonies, the soul looks upward and yearns for heaven.

There are, indeed, some green and sunny spots in his earthly pilgrimage, upon which the Christian can look back with pious and grateful satisfaction. The period of his conversion to God—the hours which were spent in devotion—his works of benev-

olence and piety—the sacrifices he has made—the trials he has endured for Jesus' sake are still remembered with lively gratitude and heart-felt pleasure. But will not the recollection and contemplation of these excite and elevate and spiritualize still more the affections and aims of his soul? Will he not long for, and weep and pray for the renewal of his better days? Will he not covet the experience of equal, if not superior communications and displays of the love and grace and power of his God? And will not there collection of the pleasure which he experienced in communion with God, imperfect as it was, increase his desire to be admitted into the presence and perfect enjoyment of God in heaven?

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES.

BY

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These were more noble than those in Thessalonica; in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily whether those things were so.—ACTS xvii. 11.

THE Apostle Paul went from Thessalonica to Berea. At the former place, his doctrines had been rejected, and he and his friends had been treated with great rudeness by the unbelieving Jews. They departed, therefore, privately, to the neighbouring city of Berea; and there Paul, according to his custom, went into the synagogue of the Jews, and three Sabbath days reasoned with them out of the Scriptures. By the Bereans, the apostle and his doctrines were differently received, and this difference is described in the text. "These were more noble than those in Thessalonica; in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so." The persons here referred to were Jews, as well as those at Thessalonica. They were strongly attached to the institutions of Moses—to the ceremonies handed down to them by their fathers, and consecrated by ages of devout observance. The

preaching of the apostle sounded strangely in their ears. It seemed to conflict with their established faith. But as he had appealed to their own Scripture, and professed to derive all his arguments and proofs from their own prophets, they did not reject them at once. They listened with fixed attention, received the word with all readiness of mind, and began to search the Scriptures for themselves, to study their sacred writings, to see if these things were so, if they were really contained in their Scriptures, and could be fairly proved by the writings of Moses and the prophets.

The conduct of the Bereans is here spoken of by the sacred writer as more noble than that of others who had rejected the gospel without examining its claims—who had retained the prejudices of their early education, without regard to the great truths which their early training involved. As the candor and diligence of the Bereans is commended, so it is worthy of our imitation, so far as the circumstances of their case are applicable to ourselves.

I. The first thing mentioned to the praise of the Bereans is that *they received the word with all readiness of mind*. This does not mean that they became Christians as soon as they heard the preaching of Paul. They did not lay aside, on the eloquent persuasions of a passing stranger, the doctrines and practice of their fathers, from the time of Moses. But the subject was interesting and important; the claims it presented were urgent and plausible; the Bereans therefore gave it their attention. They listened calmly to the wonders of

the gospel. They were willing to learn what Paul professed to teach. Whether they should adopt his doctrines was a question to be afterwards decided. In this respect, their conduct differed widely from the course of those to whom Paul had preached at Thessalonica. These rejected the gospel at once, without being acquainted with its nature. They heard some things which seemed to conflict with their previous notions, and without waiting to know the whole truth, without understanding the origin or the bearing of the gospel, they became its bitter and determined opposers.

The conduct of the Bereans in thus receiving the word with all readiness of mind, differs from the course of many who reject the gospel in our day. There are many now, as then, who hear but in part : who conceive a hasty aversion to religion, and oppose violently what they do not understand. There may be some who are familiar with the Bible who do not live according to its teachings. There is a reason for this in the depravity of the heart. Knowledge is not the whole of true piety, though the want of it is a fertile source of infidelity ; but we are safe in affirming, that most, if not all, rejecters of the gospel resemble the Bereans less than the Thessalonians.

This hasty condemnation is confessedly ungenerous. It is still more unwise. Any subject has a claim to our attention in proportion to its importance, its probability, and our opportunities of investigating its truth. Now the gospel professes to deal with the highest interests of the immortal

soul. The burden of its teaching is, that a way of salvation has been provided for dying men; that there is redemption for sinners, happiness and eternal life for the miserable and condemned. If there be but a bare possibility of its truth, it is of vast importance; but if the nature and degree of its evidence renders it highly probable; nay, if that evidence is accessible to all, and is yet so clear that it cannot be resisted, then surely the gospel has an overwhelming claim. The heart bears witness to its own sinful state; the curse of sin is all around us, it is written on all the sufferings of life, it is visible in death, and it speaks in the conscience in tones not to be misunderstood. That a way of redemption was possible, and that Jesus Christ is a divine Saviour, the apostle proved by the miracles he was empowered to perform in his name, and by the wonderful fulfilment of types and prophecies in the person and history of the Son of God. The facts upon which his arguments were based were all familiar; the proofs he brought in support of his conclusions were accessible to his hearers, and adapted to their comprehension. A refusal, therefore, to examine the subject gave evidence, either of a weak head or a bad heart.

II. The next thing worthy of note in the conduct of the Bereans is, that *they searched the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so*. After they had heard Paul's preaching, his doctrines, and his arguments, they seem slow to adopt his views. They still cling to what they know to be true. The Bible was the anchor of their faith. They had

been favored with repeated evidence that their Scriptures were a revelation from God. To the Scriptures, therefore, the Bereans resort to test the doctrines of the apostle. There was much in his preaching in apparent conflict with their ceremonial observances. It proposed to abolish customs considered sacred for ages—to lay aside the smoking altar and the bleeding victim for a spiritual sacrifice of prayer and faith. It seemed like tearing the very life of religion from their hearts. They must have clear grounds for a change so thorough. Nothing less than the authority of God himself could satisfy their minds; they search the Scriptures, therefore, with intense anxiety. It is a daily search, a close examination of its inspired teachings. The arguments of the apostle, if we may judge by his writings, were close and conclusive. There was no such thing as denying his conclusions, if his premises were correct. The Bereans searched the Scriptures in private to see if these were true. He had led them to grand results. He had exhibited God in a new and wonderful character. He had pointed out the end of their sacrifices—the great high priest and victim, so long and so beautifully typified in their temple service. He had spoken of faith in Christ as connected with peace and freedom from condemnation. Could there be any mistake on these points? did they follow from what the Old Testament taught of the character and work of their Messiah? was Jesus of Nazareth the hope of their nation? did all the descriptions of their prophets and all the symbols of their law

meet and find their fulfilment in him? Thus they compare the apostle's doctrine with their sacred books; they search the Scriptures daily; it is no occasional reading, no single question, but a repeated and anxious searching of the Bible, the expression of a sincere and ardent desire to know the truth, to know whether the gospel had a well-grounded claim upon their faith.

This is the point in which their example is especially worthy of our imitation. The gospel comes to us as it did to the Bereans, with its claims and its evidence. Its claims are founded on its importance and its probable truth: its evidence is laid in miracles and prophecy, and in the present operations of an Almighty Spirit. If we have not the ministry of Christ and his Apostles, we have their recorded testimony to the great doctrines for which they lived and died. We have the Prophecies—still unfolding their meaning to the interpretation of the events so long predicted—and we have, above all, the witness of the Spirit, in the adaptedness of the gospel to the necessities of our dying state. We have the power of the gospel exhibited in the lives of its real possessors—in its victory over sin and the grave. The very existence of the church, with its sacred influences, is a witness for the truth of the gospel; at this very day there are hundreds of thousands believing its promises and rejoicing in its hopes. It has brought peace into our communities, happiness into our families, and joyful hopes to cheer the departing moments of many once dear to our hearts. Is it possible, under

all these circumstances to remain indifferent to the question whether these things are so ; with so much to indicate its importance—with so much to render it, to say the least, probable, are we not called upon to give it a serious examination ?

If those who neglect religion are right, if they are excusable in their course, then how wonderful must be the delusion of so many of the professed believers in the gospel, from the time when Jesus died upon the cross. If these things be not so, how deeply are our friends, some whom we most respect and love, how deeply are they sunk in a miserable superstition. But if on the other hand, they are right, if they have found him of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write, then how terrible is your condition if you neglect it. If there be any thing in religion, and we neglect it, it is at the peril of our souls. To remain indifferent is to perish.

I have thus far urged attention to the subject of religion, from its importance, and from the overwhelming probability that it is true. I now mention, in conclusion, two other considerations, one drawn from the history of the Bereans, and the other from the effects of a candid examination upon Christian life.

I. The natural tendency of a candid and thorough examination of the claims of the gospel is to lead to true piety. It is added in the verse which follows the text, *Therefore many of them believed*, as the result of their fidelity in searching the scriptures. It has already been remarked that in very

many, if not in all cases, infidelity is connected with ignorance. A knowledge of the gospel is an essential element of conversion. Yet knowledge is not of itself enough to make any man a sincere Christian. There is much in the Bible which opposes the pride of the human heart, and there is much even in the character of the Saviour to give offence to wicked men. So that we might know the whole gospel, in all its parts, and yet be lost. Yet knowledge is not only important—it is necessary. Without some correct apprehension of the truths of the Bible, there is, for intelligent sinners, no salvation. It has often occurred that mere desire of knowledge—a mere willingness to examine, has led not only to a conviction of the truth, but to a saving acquaintance with its rich provisions.

It is related of Gilbert West and Lord Lyttleton, that being once in conversation on their infidel views, they agreed to unite in exposing the pretensions of the Bible from its own evidence. The one chose the history of the conversion of Paul, and the other his doctrine of the resurrection, as the points of their attacks. With vigorous minds they began the study of their subjects, and the result was two of the most masterly arguments in favor of the Christian religion now in possession of the Church. Lord Lyttleton not only convinced himself, but he will convince any candid man who reads his treatise, that the account of Paul's conversion, given in the twenty-sixth chapter of Acts, must be true, because it is impossible to explain the narration on any other supposition. It was impossible for Paul

to have been an enthusiast, a dupe, or a hypocrite. The only solution of his conduct is to be found in the truth of his narration, and in the reality of the doctrines he believed and preached.

II. Again, a thorough examination of the Scriptures is wise in reference to the satisfaction of believing and the comfort of religious experience. It lays the foundation for a solid and progressive Christian character. It gives clearness to the Christian's views, stability to his judgment, and confidence throughout his life. He is distracted by no fears, lest all should prove delusive. He knows it to be true. He has received no cunningly devised fable. His house is built upon the rock, unmoved by all the storms of unbelief.

Therefore, let the duty of searching the Scriptures become a paramount matter, not only because the whole subject of religion is of vast and unspeakable importance; not only because all the evidence is in favor of its truth; but also because this is one divinely-appointed means of conversion, and because the knowledge of the Scriptures thus obtained will be of incalculable benefit to you, if you ever do become a sincere follower of Christ. As, therefore, you value your safety, as you hope to have an interest in the blessings of the gospel, and as you desire to enjoy the advantages of religion, let me urge you to search the Scriptures, whether these things are so.

THE POSITION OF THE HUMAN RACE IN THE DIVINE ECONOMY.

BY

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“God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that He might have mercy upon all.”—ROM. xi. 32.

God hath concluded them all,—that is, both Jews and Gentiles,—*in unbelief, that He might have mercy upon all*. The truth here asserted, the Apostle re-affirms in his Epistle to the Galatians, iii. 22. His language there is, “The Scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.”

From a comparison of these two passages, it is evident:

(1.) That the expression in the Epistle to the Galatians,—“*the Scripture* hath concluded all under sin,”—simply means, that the Scriptures declare the fact, that *God* hath so concluded all.

(2.) That the expression “in unbelief,” as it occurs in the text, is synonymous with “under sin,”—the word “unbelief” being so used, since unbelief is the most prominent development of the sinfulness of our race.

(3.) The language used in the Epistle to the Galatians, explains or renders definite the particular form or manifestation of “mercy” referred to in the text—“that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ, might be given to them that believe.”

(4.) When the text declares that God designed to “have mercy upon *all*,” the corresponding expression in the Epistle to the Galatians teaches, that the word “all” in this connexion is not to be taken in its universal, unlimited signification, but is restricted to all “them that believe.”

The doctrine, therefore, of the Apostle, in these passages of Scripture, is, that—

GOD HATH CONCLUDED ALL UNDER SIN, THAT HE MIGHT MANIFEST HIS MERCY, IN THE SALVATION, THROUGH CHRIST, OF THEM THAT BELIEVE.

We may be enabled to apprehend more distinctly, and fully, this important truth, by considering, in order—

1st, The fact, that all men are under sin.

2dly, That they are so by the permissive will of God.

3dly, The end which God accomplishes, and which we may therefore say, He designed to accomplish, by this permission.

I. And first, as to the fact, that *all men are under sin*.

David, in the 14th, and again in the 53d Psalm, declares in language, which is again repeated by the Apostle Paul in his Epistle to the Romans,—as if to multiply the testimony of inspiration to the

fact,—“there is none righteous, no, not one; there is none that understandeth; there is none that seeketh after God; they are all gone out of the way; they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.” Rom. iii. 10–12. Paul elsewhere expresses this same truth, in connexion with a declaration as to the origin and consequences of this, our deplorable condition. “By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.” Rom. v. 12.

What a commentary on these and similar declarations of Scripture, does the history of our race present! We see sin manifested, not as a peculiarity of particular individuals, or classes, or nations, or races; nor confined to particular times and eras,—*all* have sinned, and come short of the glory of God,—there is no man that liveth and sinneth not.

And this evil thing affects, not only all human actions, and words, and thoughts, but our very nature is corrupt,—the fruit is not good, because the tree is not good,—the waters are foul, because the fountain is impure,—we are “conceived in sin”—we are “brought forth in iniquity,”—we are “by nature, the children of wrath.” We see the wages of sin—the penalty of a want of conformity to God’s law,—reigning “even over those who have not sinned after the similitude of Adam’s transgression.” Rom. v. 14. The newly-born infant, scarce conscious of its being, is yet the subject of suffering and of death; and is marked thereby, no less distinctly than was guilty Cain, as obnoxious

to God's all-comprehending and uncompromising law.

This universal and entire sinfulness of our race—a fact, in itself, so abasing and so alarming—does not when announced make upon us its due impression ; partly, because of the effect of sin upon ourselves, deadening our moral sensibilities ; and partly, because all around us are, like ourselves, involved in the guilty degradation. Not only does sin blind us, or at least render us indifferent to its own appalling enormity, but besides, all intelligent creatures with whom we are sensibly acquainted, are our fellow-sinners.

But consider, for a moment, what sin is ; and consider, too, that notwithstanding the many millions of the human race, sin is, doubtless, still a comparatively rare thing among God's intelligent creatures ; and we will see reason for dread wonder, that the Omnipotent and Holy One, should allow such wretches as we are, to defile his creation.

For, what is sin ? It is the violation of the law of God ; a law, to which we are, by the very fact of our existence, bound to render supreme obedience ; a law, too, which, even whilst we transgress it, we cannot but acknowledge is only “ holy, and just, and good.” Sin is therefore nothing less than unprovoked rebellion against our Maker,—it is nothing other than enmity against our God. This is the fearful thing of which we all are guilty.

And then, too, we stand almost alone in our iniquity. Sin, we have reason to believe, is a comparatively rare thing, and a sinner is the exception

among the subjects of God's wide dominion. Think of those myriad worlds, and systems of worlds, with which He, who is "Almighty in working," has (we may almost say) filled immensity—in comparison with which the trifling earth we tread is but as the small dust of the balance—an atom floating in the sunbeam. Think of these countless worlds, all peopled as they doubtless are with countless generations of intelligent and responsible creatures,—think of the vast gap in the scale of intelligence, between our finite minds and God the Infinite—a gap filled in with rank above rank, in long succession, of angelic beings,—thrones, and dominions, and principalities, and powers;—and of all these innumerable hosts—innumerable not merely as to individuals, but as to species or kinds of individual being—there are not, we have reason to believe, such moral monsters as sinners found, except on earth where we abide, and in hell. Men and devils damned, alone of all creation, have dared to lift the arm of rebellion against the Lord of Hosts. Other orders of intelligent creatures are, doubtless, rejoicing in the holy exercises of their unfallen faculties—loving with supreme affection, serving with untiring zeal, glorifying with unmingled devotion, their great, adorable Creator—as burning seraphs before the throne, or winged cherubs on swift flight to do His will—ministering spirits, ever hearkening to the voice of His word. Children of men, and demons of the pit, alone of all God's hosts, shun their Creator's blessed presence, despise His holy

law, dishonour His hallowed name, and would rob Him of His glory.

Suppose that man had never fallen, and that our race were still rejoicing in the full glory of our first estate; and suppose that among the many millions of the happy, holy, inhabitants of earth, some one or two sinners should appear—rebels against God, “rejoicing in iniquity,” “loving darkness rather than the light”—such wretches would not present to our eyes a sight more strange and monstrous, than our race now presents to the holy intelligences above us, and to Jehovah, our sovereign God.

Such, my friends, is our lamentable condition—“under sin”—at “enmity against God”—“children of wrath.”

II. But further, not only are all men thus under sin, but *they are so by the permissive will of God*. This is the second point proposed for our consideration.

“God hath concluded,” is the declaration of the text, “all in unbelief,” or “under sin.” This language does not merely teach that since men have, in fact, become sinners, God now regards them as such,—it expresses the higher truth, that our race have fallen into this state of sin, by His permissive will. “*God hath concluded* all in unbelief.”

The word “concluded,” here, has evidently not its now common and ordinary signification of *finished*, *completed*, but its original and proper etymological signification as given in the margin, *shut up together*. The form of expression represents us, as,

by the permission of God, shut up together under sin,—like prisoners, shut up together in a prison ; or like the occupants of a besieged city, shut up together by the power of the enemy. So has God seen fit to give up our race to the power of sin.

That we are thus under sin by His permissive will, is evident :

1st. From the very fact itself, that we are now under sin. For this important fact in the history of mankind, must have occurred either *by* the permissive will of God, or *in opposition to* His will, or (the only remaining supposition) He had no will in regard to the occurrence.

Now, we say that neither this event, nor any event, small or great, has ever occurred, *in opposition to* the will of the Sovereign Ruler of the universe. “My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure,” saith the Lord. Yea, Jehovah, the only God, ever “doeth His will among the armies of heaven and the inhabitants of earth.” No creature, nor combination of creatures, can stay His almighty arm.

Nor, further, can it be true, that God, our Maker, *had no will* in reference to the obedience or fall of man, and the consequent holiness or sinfulness of our race. The God of the Bible is not—as some of the heathen imagine of their deities—indifferent to the condition of the creatures He has brought into being. He is not only the Creator, but the Controller and Governor of the universe, having his own wise and mighty purposes, which He is ever accomplishing. “His throne is in the

heavens, and He maketh this earth His footstool, and His kingdom ruleth over all." The very hairs of our head are numbered by Him—yea "not a sparrow falleth to the ground without our Father"—and dare we imagine, that He was or is indifferent as that which affects the destiny of a whole race of His immortal creatures?

Since, then, the fall of man, and the consequent sinfulness of our race, could not have occurred in opposition to the Divine will,—since it is an event, in regard to which He would not have been indifferent, we say, that the very existence of the fact, is an incontestible proof that it occurred by His permissive will.

But, 2dly, This is further confirmed by the express declarations of Scripture. "He worketh *all things*," says the Apostle, "all things after the counsel of His own will." Eph. i. 11. And lest any should suppose that sinful events were beyond or without His providential control, His own voice is heard declaring "I form the light, and create darkness,—I make peace, and create evil; I, the Lord, do all these things." Isa. xlv. 7. With even more distinctness, if possible, the Spirit, by Solomon, declares, "the Lord hath made all things for Himself, yea, even the wicked for the day of evil." Prov. xvi. 4. In harmony with these and similar passages of Scripture, is the declaration of the text, "God hath concluded all in unbelief."

In regard to the proposition here maintained, that men are under sin by the permissive will of God, it may be appropriate to remark, that it does

not mean, that God *compelled* our first parents to eat the forbidden fruit, or now *compels* any of our race to sin; neither does it mean that God at all interfered with the wills of our first parents, or now interferes with our wills, so as to dispose us to sin *voluntarily* against Him. There is no such agency on the part of God, in the occurrence of sin, as to make Him, in any sense, the author of our iniquity.

But it means, and simply means, that God, by wise and holy determination, permitted, and still permits man, in the exercise of his freedom of will, to sin. Sin, on the part of man, is voluntary, self-moved,—it has its source in himself, and God sees fit to withhold restraining grace. The Creator “made man upright,” and man, not God, “has sought out wicked inventions.”

This view of sin, as to the manner of its occurrence, may be apprehended more distinctly by considering the language of Jehovah on one occasion, in regard to the rebellious Israelites—“Ephraim is joined to his idols; let him alone.” *Let him alone.* It is not necessary to the occurrence of sin, that God should interfere by any direct agency,—it is enough that He *lets man alone*, and the unrestrained human heart spontaneously manifests iniquity.

III. We come, then, to the third point proposed for our consideration, namely, *the end which God accomplishes, and which we may therefore say, He designed to accomplish, by the permission of sin.*

When we consider, on the one hand, the infinite Holiness and Benevolence of God; and on the

other, the turpitude of sin, and the incalculable misery which it has brought upon our race, the inquiry presents itself,—Why was sin permitted ?

The propriety of our asking this question, and endeavouring to know the answer, depends entirely upon the spirit which dictates the inquiry. If we ask this, from any feeling of doubt or mistrust as to the infinite holiness and goodness of God,—if we ask it from a wish to know the reasons of His dealings with us, that we may sit in judgment on them, and decide whether they be sufficient,—if we ask, from a want of confidence in the Ruler of the universe, which will not be satisfied until we understand and approve of the motives of His conduct ; if such be our spirit, we do in asking but sin most heinously against our Maker. To the caviller God giveth not account of any of his matters. To a spirit of presumptuous inquiry, His reply is only the withering rebuke, “ Who art thou, O ! man, that repliest unto God ? Shall the thing formed say unto him that formed it, ‘ Why hast thou made me thus ?’ Has not the potter power over the same clay to make one vessel unto honour, and another to dishonour ? ”

But if, on the other hand, we approach this subject in humble faith, fully assured that whether we can always see it or not, God is righteous in all His ways, and holy in all His works,—if we come, believing that whatever darkness and clouds are round about Him, righteousness and judgment are still the habitation of His throne,—if we come to

this subject, prepared to trust God in regard to whatever of Himself He has not yet revealed, or we cannot yet understand, and only desire to know and understand so far as He has seen fit to reveal Himself; and are moved to this, too, not by mere carnal curiosity, but that we may be led thereby to love and adore Him the more,—if we humbly seek an answer to the question proposed in such a spirit, we are in so doing not only innocently engaged, but are fulfilling a solemn and responsible duty,—a duty imposed upon us by every intellectual and moral faculty He has given us, and by every revelation He has made of Himself, in His works and in His word. The highest and most appropriate exercise of our powers is in seeking after, and attaining unto, more distinct and enlarged views of the being, and attributes, and works, and word of the great God that made us. “This is eternal life”—the very *life* of an immortal spirit—“*to know Thee*, the only true and living God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.” “Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom,” says Jeremiah, “let not the mighty man glory in his might—let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me: saith the Lord.”

Wilful ignorance, or indifference, in regard to what God *has* revealed of Himself, is no less criminal than is presumptuous inquiry, into those secret things which it is not yet given us to know.

We may, therefore—if our spirit be one of hum-

ble docility and faith—if our desire be to “increase in the knowledge of God,” that our love for Him, and adoration, may thereby be increased,—we may, or rather we *should*, in such a frame, and with such motives, seek to know what God has revealed in regard to the end He would accomplish, by the permission of the fall and sinfulness of our race.

As preparatory to an answer of this inquiry, we remark, that God was *under no obligation to prevent sin*. The Creator was not *bound in justice* to restrain His responsible creatures from sinning against Himself, and exposing themselves to an adequate punishment. Having created them holy, and having given them a law which was holy, just, and good, it was their duty to obey. And when, self-moved, they would violate that law, and bring upon themselves its penalty, His relation to them imposed on Him no obligation to compel their obedience. To deny this, is simply to deny God’s right of moral government over His intelligent creatures. It would be an absurdity to give commands, with promises and threatenings annexed, if the law-giver were himself obliged to accomplish the performance of all that was required. We repeat, therefore, that God was *under no obligation*—He was not *bound in justice* to prevent sin.

This truth, whilst of course, it does not answer the question under consideration, is of importance in this connection, as preparing the mind to receive the answer.

To return to the particular inquiry proposed—though God had, as we have seen, the right, in

justice, to permit, yet what are we to regard as His design in permitting, the sin of the human race?

To obtain an intelligent answer to this question, we should first ask the more general question—what is the design or ultimate end of all God's works of creation and providence?

By our very idea of God, as the self-existent, the Infinite, the Eternal, as well as by the teachings of Scripture, we are led to the conclusion that the main design, the ultimate end, the final cause of His creative and providential acts, all and singular, has not reference to anything in the creature, but to Himself, the Creator. Not only is it true that, "by Him were all things created, that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones or dominions or principalities or powers," not only *by* Him but "*for* Him, were they all created." Col. i. 16. Or as it is declared in the song of the heavenly host—"Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and were created." Rev. iv. 11. God is not only the source, and the means, but the *end* of all His works. "Of Him, and through Him, and to Him," says St. Paul, "are all things, to whom be glory for ever." Rom. xi. 36.

And when we further ask, what end in *reference to Himself*, God would accomplish, by His various works and dispensations, we unhesitatingly answer, the promotion of His own glory. "All Thy works shall, and do praise Thee, O Lord." Ps. cxlv. 10. *The glory of God*, is the great end of all His works of creation and providence.

But what is precisely meant, when it is said, that all God's works are designed to promote His glory? Is it meant that these things, or anything, either did or could, add to the essential glory of the Most High? Can it mean that the greatness or the excellence of the Deity, is thereby enhanced? No, God was no less the infinitely glorious God, before ever time was,—before the foundation of the earth or heavens were laid—before aught of the vast universe had existence—when, as yet, the Godhead dwells alone, rejoicing in the ineffable bliss of their own divine communion. Just as the sun, which courses in such majesty the heavens, would be the self-same glorious object, though no eye had been created to behold its splendour—so, God would have been the self-same glorious God, though no “morning star” had been brought into being, to sing His praises—though no one of the “sons of God” had ever been created, to glorify Him, with shouts of joy.

When, therefore, it is said, that the works of creation and providence were all designed to promote *the glory* of God, reference is had, not to His essential or intrinsic glory, but to His declarative, or manifested glory. His works and dispensations were not designed to add to, but to manifest, the already existing, infinite excellence and majesty of His adorable being, and attributes.

When in eternity God dwelt alone, in infinite wisdom and love, He determined to make a manifestation of Himself—to show forth His glory. And how would He effect this purpose? By bring-

ing into being, creatures endowed with faculties whereby they might, in some measure, apprehend His glory; and then making to them revelations and exhibitions of His being, and character, and attributes;—such exhibitions and revelations as would afford them some true knowledge of Himself, and lead them, in the fullness of gratitude and of joy, to love and serve, and glorify Him for ever. *The glory of God, as it consists in the manifestation of Himself*, is the great design, the ultimate end, the final cause of all His creative acts and providential dispensations. His works and words and ways are all but different exhibitions of some one or other of the glorious attributes of His character—different manifestations of His being, or wisdom, or power, or holiness, or justice, or goodness, or truth. They are designed to lead His intelligent creatures who behold them, to a clearer and more comprehensive view of Himself and His adorable perfections, to the end, that they may be filled thereby, with ever new and constantly increasing, joy and love, and adoration. It is in this light that we should ever view the wonders of His works—it is with this key alone that we may endeavour to unlock the mysteries of His providence.

When we come then to the particular question under consideration—the design of God in the permission of the sinfulness of man, we are to look for the solution, in the reply to the more easily answered question,—the manifestation of what attribute of God is peculiar to His dispensations towards the human race? What phase of His all glorious per-

fection, is here most fully, and yet, elsewhere not at all (we have reason to believe,) displayed?

We answer from the whole history of those dealings, as well as from the declaration of such scriptures, as the text—His MERCY; and by this we distinctly mean, *His favour toward the guilty—His love toward sinners*. Other divine attributes are of course exhibited, and that most gloriously, in God's dispensations toward our race, but they appear as incidental to the manifestation of His *mercy*. This darling attribute is here *peculiarly* displayed. He “concluded all in unbelief that He might have *mercy* upon all.” He permitted man to fall, but He has manifested the wonders of His love toward the fallen. He did not restrain our race from sin, as, we should bear in mind He was under no obligation to do, but when we had become thus “dead in trespasses and sins,” “by nature, children of wrath,” because He was “rich in *mercy*, for His great love wherewith He loved us,” He quickens us from our death of sin, into newness of spiritual life; and all this, to the end, as we are told by inspiration, “that in the ages to come, *He might shew the exceeding riches of His grace* in His kindness toward us, through Christ Jesus.” Eph. ii. 1—7.

Until the fall of man, there doubtless, had never been a manifestation of the divine attribute of mercy. We have no reason to believe that His creatures as yet knew, that “the Lord was gracious, and full of compassion,” even for the guilty. Angels had sinned and without mercy they were visited with wrath and destruction. It was not until

man, too, had fallen, that this previously unseen attribute was destroyed. And then, how gloriously—not merely mercy, but mercy truly Godlike—not simply grace, but “riches of grace unsearchable,”—not only love, but infinite “love, the length and breadth and depth and height of which, passeth knowledge,”—a love which not only delivers from a merited punishment, but raises up to glory—a strange affection, which has vile sinners for its objects, and not only snatches them from out the very jaws of death and hell eternal, but washes them from all defilement, and making them partakers of the divine nature,”—exalts them to high seats “in heavenly places” with incarnate Deity. Yes, here was exhibited, a new, a most glorious, and yet probably a previously unimagined attribute of Jehovah’s character.

“ Never did angels taste, above,
Redeeming grace and dying love.”

Other divine attributes had long previously been manifested, and had excited the adoration of the unfallen heavenly host. They had seen the heavens declaring the glory of their Maker, and the firmament showing forth His handiwork. The existing universe was to them a record of their Creator’s wisdom, power and skill, and they had been taught thereby, the anthem of Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, to Him who had created all things, and for whose pleasure they are and were created.

And again, in all the faculties of their being,

and in the abundant provision made for their right exercise, affording an existence of uninterrupted and unmingled happiness, the angelic hosts had a constant manifestation, or rather, an experience of Jehovah's goodness—His benevolence—that attribute which moves Him to promote the happiness of his creatures. They had tasted and seen that "the Lord was good.

And further, in the holy character of all their joys, in the very constitution of their natures, and in that law of their Creator, to which they all were subject, they had full exhibition of God's attribute of holiness, and they ceased not, day nor night, to shout one to another, "Holy, holy, holy, is our Lord God Almighty."

And once more, when rebellion had entered the ranks of the heavenly host, and Satan seduced many to foul revolt against the majesty of heaven, and Jehovah, in just judgment, cast the rebels from his presence down to hell—reserved there in chains and darkness unto the judgment of the great day, the unfallen angels saw an exhibition of God's attribute of justice, and of his truth immutable, and they doubtless sung, as John in vision heard them sing, when the vials of wrath were poured out, upon the finally impenitent of men, "Thou art righteous, O Lord, because thou hast thus judged, for they are worthy—even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments."

Before the fall of man, therefore, the intelligent creation had seen full manifestations of God's being, and wisdom, and power, and goodness, and holiness,

and justice and truth. But as yet, they had not seen an exhibition of God's grace and mercy. They had known, indeed, His love, but not His love toward sinners. When, therefore, in the garden, our first parents plucked and ate the fruit forbidden, what strange surprise must have filled the angelic host, at God's delay to thrust down sinful man to an abode with guilty devils in the pit! With what wonder would they hear their holy Sovereign, as he drove the sinning pair forth from the garden, announce to them the promise, that the woman's seed should bruise the serpent's head! And when our fallen parents, ventured from time to time, to draw nigh to God in worship, and the heavenly host beheld that they were not repulsed—when they saw them bringing offerings to the Lord, to which He “had respect,” how would their hearts begin to throb with a new joy, as they beheld in this the glimmerings of a manifestation of a new and glorious—a previously unseen attribute of their adorable Jehovah! And when righteous Abel was stricken, first of human kind, by the hand of death, and his disembodied spirit recreated in God's image, appeared among the unfallen worshippers of the upper sanctuary, cleansed from all the defilement of his sins, spotless as the holy host around him, rejoicing with them in the pure and perfect joys of their heavenly dwelling-place, with what a thrill of gladness would they welcome him to their blessed communion, and with what swelling bursts of a new praise would they adore the wonderful love of their divine Creator! With what ready zeal would

they now go forth on the strange mission of ministering to sinful, vile children of the dust, yet still, by wondrous love of God, the heirs of heaven and glory! How cheerfully, and with swift wing, would they fly at God's command, to take charge of the chosen ones, to bear them up in their angelic hands, to guard with tender care, the pathway of their earthly pilgrimage, to be with them and sustain them in the hour of death, and after death, to receive them into fond embrace, and convey them to the blessed everlasting mansions! And with what interest would the angels watch all the operations of this gracious love of God—how would they study its successive developments and “desire to look into” the mysteries of the wondrous plan, in which they knew, though as yet they knew not how, “mercy and truth did meet together—righteousness and peace did kiss each other!” And when, in the fullness of time, they beheld Him, whom they had ever worshipped as their God and Creator—co-equal with the Father, and the very “brightness of His glory”—leaving His high seat upon the throne, veiling, as it were, His majesty divine, descending to earth, and taking upon Himself the humble nature of humanity, and that too, in its humblest form—a feeble babe, in Bethlehem's stable manger—when they beheld the amazing sight of Deity incarnate, and saw that in *that* humiliation, the mercy and the justice, the grace and yet the holiness of God, were all to be harmoniously and most gloriously displayed—overwhelmed with wonder no longer, merely at the love of God.

but at the infinitude of that love, and at the infinite wisdom displayed in the plan for a sinner's salvation—from heaven to earth, and back again to heaven, with joyful lips they shout, "Glory to God in the Highest, peace on earth, good will toward men—glory to God in the Highest!" And when the dispensations of this wondrous plan of grace shall have been completed, when the chosen of the Lord shall all have been ingathered, and ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousand of thousands, redeemed from among the children of men shall appear in the presence of God's heavenly glory, with their robes of white, and their harps of gold, and their palms of victory, and their crowns of everlasting life—when Jesus shall present before the throne, His blood-bought church complete, then shall all heaven's hosts unite, around the throne, in new strains of loftiest adoration—then shall the apocalyptic ascription of highest glory to Jehovah be fulfilled: "I, John, heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; salvation and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God; and again they said Alleluia; and the four and twenty elders and four beasts fell down and worshipped God, that sat on the throne, saying, Amen, Alleluia; and a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants: and I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, and the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth, let us be glad and rejoice, and

give honour to Him, *for the marriage of the Lamb is come.*" Rev. xix. 1—7.

In view of these results, which God accomplishes for His glory, can we doubt as to the main design, the ultimate end, the final cause of His dispensations towards the human race, including, as these dispensations do, the permission of our sin.

In conclusion, it remains but to ask, what effect should be produced in us by the important truths we have been considering. We answer :

First. This subject should produce in us as it did in the Apostle, (as seen from the context,) more profound views of *the absolute sovereignty of God*. He is Himself, the source, the means, and the end of all His works. He is "the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the ending, the first and the last"—ever accomplishing His own wise and holy purposes among "the armies of heaven and the inhabitants of earth." The highest and holiest of His creatures have neither merit nor power before Him. All are less than vanity, and as nothing, before God. "For who hath first given to Him, that it should be recompensed to him again? For of Him, and to Him, and through Him, are all things, to whom be glory for ever." Rom. xi. 35, 36.

Secondly. These truths should lead us as they did the Apostle, (as seen from the context,) to adore *the infinite wisdom and knowledge of God*, as displayed in His dealings with our race. We should be ready to exclaim with Paul, "Oh, the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God." All comprehending knowledge, which em-

braced the countless thousands of our race, which took in all the necessities and circumstances of their being, which surveyed all the means requisite to the accomplishment of the divine purpose, and all the results of those means from the beginning to the end. Infinite wisdom, too, in selecting and adapting the means to the object in view, in the ordering of every part, as well as the whole of the entire scheme of human destiny, so that our highest happiness, and the glory of our Creator, may thereby ever be abundantly promoted. We see displayed herein not merely Almighty power triumphing over sin, and death, and hell, but wisdom infinite,

“ Building on sin’s demolished throne,
A temple to God’s praise.

From broken, scattered fragments, gathered out of the very ruins of the fall, Jehovah has reared a monument, which everlastingly shall stand to the praise of His glorious grace, and throughout all coming ages, shall display “to the principalities and powers in heavenly places, the manifold wisdom of God.” Eph. iii. 10.

Thirdly. The truths we have been considering should fill our hearts with grateful love to the Father of mercies and the God of all grace. What reason have we for thankfulness, in being permitted to experience that “the Lord is gracious and full of compassion!” For bear in mind, that every blessing we enjoy, every good thing that cometh down to us from the Father of Lights, all the unsearch-

able riches of Christ, are blessings undeserved, gifts to which we not only have no claim, but the very reverse of which is our desert. God was under no obligation to provide a ransom for us, and in Him manifest to us His unbounded love. The hopeless state of devils in the pit, may teach us that all the favours, we sinners of mankind enjoy, are the gifts of God's rich, free, sovereign, and distinguishing grace.


And how should we feel His claims upon our gratitude and love rise to a still greater height, when we consider, that not only are we made the direct objects of the Divine mercy, but He has made us the honoured instruments of for ever showing forth "the exceeding riches of His grace," to all the intelligent creation. Not only are Christians now "the lights of this world"—they are henceforth evermore to be, as it were, among the very lights of heaven. Not only are they now epistles of God's grace, "known and read of men"—angelic eyes shall ever gaze upon them with interest and delight, and behold in their exaltation, the infinite wisdom and power, the holiness and justice, the goodness and truth, and the wonderfully merciful love of God.

And lastly, these truths should lead each one, personally, *to seek with all earnestness and diligence, to have these blessed purposes of mercy fulfilled in his own experience.* We have seen the great end which God would accomplish in all His dealings with our race, we are able to understand why He he has brought us into being and ordered, as he

has, all His dispensations towards us, to manifest His mercy in bestowing upon us everlasting happiness and glory. We have clearly set before us, therefore, what the Lord would have us to do—accept, at once, this “great salvation,” so dearly purchased, so freely offered; receive, with our whole heart, the Lord Jesus, as our Saviour and our King, and enjoy in Him, now and for evermore, Jehovah’s gracious and unbounded favour.

We may, indeed, refuse these precious mercies. We may, notwithstanding all, “neglect this great salvation.” And what then? Shall we thereby rob God of his glory? No—God will glorify Himself, not only in them that are saved, but also in them that perish. If we refuse to glorify Him in our salvation, He will glorify Himself in our destruction. If we refuse to be the monuments of His mercy in the realms of heavenly light, we shall then become the monuments of His Almighty wrath in the pit of darkness, and with devils damned, through all eternity, display the holy justice of our Sovereign God. “Seek ye the Lord, then, whilst He may be found—call ye upon Him whilst He is near.” “Oh! taste and see that the Lord is good—that blessed are they who put their trust in Him.”

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